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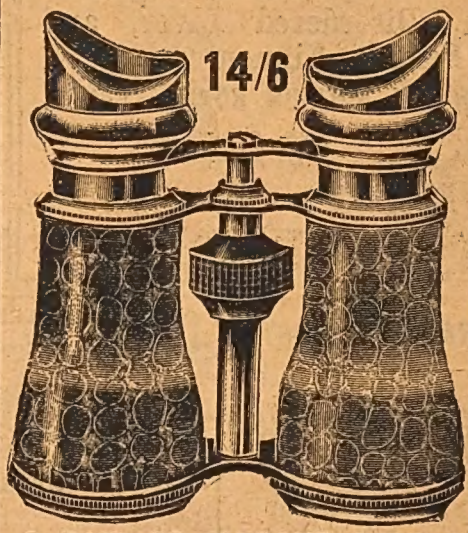

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THE OTHER HALF OF THE SCISSORS.

"SO you're going out to get tied up, lassie—d'ye know, I though you were just that kind of girl!"

Grahame Leicester was by nature an honest man, and by education a gentleman; therefore, with no small sense of shame he looked into the eyes of the girl he was addressing and told a direct—yes, a deliberate lie.

Fourteen days on an ocean liner with Violet Hawthorn had taught him many things. One was that it mattered not whether the sea and sky alike were turquoise, and sun and wind chased each other under the awning of the quarter deck, making one glad to be alive—or whether a lowering sky drove up in thick banks of cloud lashing the cold grey sea into a fury—each phase was as one, so that he might see one thing—a wiry little black-eyed, black-haired figure in blue pilot coat and skirt, with a Tam o' Shanter set jauntily on her almost raven locks, and a merry dimple chasing a pout or a look of unutterable scorn across her face.

It was not that of a goddess or of a saint—but it seemed to Grahame Leicester that he, at least, had seen traces of either there, in that little brown, mobile face. He had perhaps been afforded greater opportunity than most of judging, for she had evinced a preference for his society because, as she told him with delightful candour, that he "was English—and not a bounder."

She looked up at him now as he spoke, her already more than *retroussé* nose seeming to tilt still higher as she threw him a look, half-inquiring, half-scornful, from her bright eyes.

Then, as if altering their purpose, the scorn died out, and into their soft clear depths crept one of pity.

And Grahame Leicester knew she had seen the little fib that he had jerked out to cover his surprise. But he did not know that the pity that shone from those unexplored depths came—not at the thought of the slight deviation from the truth—but at the thought of the need of it. She knew that old old code of an English gentleman so fast dying out—*noblesse oblige*, made the little subterfuge rather a point of honour than a lie to Grahame Leicester.

True it was only that morning it had been brought home to her by something which she had overheard, that she was more than an ordinary fellow passenger in the eyes of her chosen chum. He fidgetted uneasily on the saloon cushions as he twirled his well-worn felt hat, and watched the queer anomaly that faced him making up her diary.

"Sticking me in it for all I know—making me out the fool I am," he muttered to himself.

The object of his thoughts scribbled on, a queer little smile of inscrutability puckering up the corners of her mouth.

Then, at last, exasperated by her seeming indifference he spoke:

"Say, lassie, d'ye think that when you've finished your quill-driving you'll be fit for a game of deck billiards—things are awfully slow up there. Hurry up, or someone'll have jumped our claim."

Violet Hawthorn was meditatively sucking the end of her penholder—a relic of the days when she was a young Barbarian, jumping five-barred gates and punting headlong into muddy ditches with her brothers.

"Yes! Perhaps—but don't bother and—do you think it would be possible for you to talk in real 'Pukka' English—just for one day, say? I'm demoralised already—just listen to the rubbish I've been entering in my diary—Phil said in his letter—Mr. Leicester, that is the man we call the 'Bushranger' (that's you) has 'jumped our claim' now, did you ever hear such nonsense—and only yesterday it was 'Mr. Leicester says I'm to come along on deck and bring my swag' it's awful, and I tell you when they read it, it will turn the mater's hair grey, and all because you will bother and use bush slang."

She ended with an injured little pout, and a face of solemn mock-earnestness.

"Hang it! Why don't you tell a fellow straight, when you don't want him—to go." And the 'Bushranger' rose and fled in more haste than the occasion warranted—but not on deck. He presently found him-

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self in his cabin at the farther end of the main deck corridor.

He dropped on to a huge overland trunk that he had succeeded, by means of sundry tips, in getting into his cabin; and his head fell into his hands. He was 'sorting himself out a bit,' as he called it.

It was not often he indulged in real hard thinking; except when a long spell up country found him at his hut door on some quiet heat-laden night, when the very air seemed to be used up, with only a pipe, and a Dingo howling some twenty yards away for company.

When amongst his kind, he was generally occupied in studying them, for the mere novelty of the thing.

He had been indulging in this, his favourite pastime, for the past two weeks, having ample opportunity as a second saloon passenger of the *Ogowe*, bound from Tilbury Dock to Sydney.

But to-day it had been brought home to him that he had ceased to generalise—and that the human freight of the *Ogowe* came out as tallied by Violet Hawthorn.

"Great Scott!" he muttered to himself, beads of perspiration standing out upon his forehead, "she's lashing into us pretty freely in that diary of hers. It'll be straight work all of it though—not often you meet with a girl who can be straight nowadays—doesn't seem to be included in their education, real Pukka straight as she calls it—she got that addition to her vocabulary from Kipling, I suppose. Well, Grahame, my boy, you're a fool; it's another one of your silly castles in the air that are always falling to bits—go and play the man!"

This form of reasoning was what Grahame Leicester called his sitting down philosophy, or, as he quaintly put it, "I just say to myself, sit down."

He frequently recommended that means of self-repression, having found the need for it in long long hours of introspection, fighting temptations that only those who have faced the utter desolateness of life in an Australian back block can understand.

He pulled himself up with an effort, only the faint quiver round the lips, and the distension of the proud well-bred nostrils showing how tough had been the fight.

Grahame Leicester had been home on a six months' holiday, which, after ten years of his desolate life, he felt he had deserved.

There had been, in the innermost recesses of his "attic," a back thought, and that was, that perchance amongst his old chums of his boyhood's days there might be found one girl who would not deem it too great a sacrifice to share his desolate life with him. But time had not stood still in the old homeland, and he found hoydens turned into hunting wives of sporting squires—plain, correct girls turned into grave-faced matrons and mothers, and shy, clinging little lassies figuring in the society columns of the ladies' weeklies.

Again he brought his philosophy to bear upon the point, but with bitter insistency the thought haunted him that no one wanted him. There was apparently no use for him—no place—why had he come?

Perhaps he was a little bit too proud to see the fine, very fine mental distinction they had made between the handsome, fresh-faced lad who, twelve years ago had been up for Sandhurst—and the bronzed, thick-set man of thirty who had come among them, with a touch of baldness where the most fascinating wavy locks had once flourished, and a moustache as wiry apparently as himself

They did not understand him—the man of the quiet moods; and so he had turned back again—and alone; to his birds and beasts who knew him—to his mother nature who had nurtured him so long.

Then Fate played him, as it seemed, another trick, and threw across his path this child-woman—this elf, with her school-girl face and her Mother-heart that seemed to have room for all. To-day he had learned from her own lips that there was, as she framed it, "a fire-proof compartment," where she kept that one who was so very rich that he could afford that she should scatter the crumbs he had left of her heart's love, on those around her.

She had given him excellent advice too, on the subject of natural selection in a quaint, grandmotherly fashion that at once sat oddly, and yet seemed to fit certain moods in her to perfection.

Phil Armstrong and she had been playmates, and it was owing to her that he had used his influence and been put on the Australian Station where, as First-Lieutenant of H.M.S. *Waratan*, he now awaited her arrival.

"It's three years since I saw him; but you know nothing matters—nothing so long as you are quite sure that you're the other half of the scissors."

And the man, grown cynical, out of the depth of his experience, marvelled at the faith that is still left to some women.

"Funny thing how she mixed that sentence up in her diary too," and he repeated her words, lingering almost affectionately on them.

"What irony it looks taken literally, 'Mr. Leicester, that is, the man we call the Bushranger has jumped our claim'—fortunately I don't think she saw it. Egad, a chance would be a fine thing if there were any—but, even if there were, it's one of the things a fellow can't do. Heigho! She'll be waiting now I suppose."

He swung along the alley-way and up the companion to find the object of his thoughts swinging her white, canvas-clad feet from the height of the wooden bar that held the supports of the after-bridge.

As usual a small coterie had gathered round Miss Hawthorn, each eager to get in a word as she emphatically delivered judgment on a variety of subjects; which concerned chiefly the choice of a team for the ladies' tug-o-war, the superior claims of a dance on deck to a variety concert below, and all the usual topics of life on shipboard.

She threw him a fearless friendly smile of welcome over the heads of the little crowd, a smile that puzzled, not a little, those who had begun to take an interest in the couple. She did not notice their apparent making way instinctively for him, but Grahame Leicester did, fresh from the sting of the wound, which, reason as he might, he could not deny had been a blow to him that morning.

"I'm promised to Mr. Leicester for a game of billiards now," she said, slipping down without the proffered help of several hands. "Come along, I'm ready."

"Swish, swish," went the wooden circles along the deck as the long cues drew back with a clatter.

"What bad play, Mr. Leicester. Don't send them back to England; it's quite hot enough without the extra exertion of raking them in. Do you know, you haven't scored one yet?"

He did know, and took the scorn in her voice meekly. He would atone in the last round, and there was a sort of grim satisfaction in arousing her out of her indifferent attitude. The mobile mouth had begun to droop, and the forehead to pucker ominously; they

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always won when they played together, and this morning he was scoring so very badly. What could be the matter?

The game ended and the score was called: "Game to plain, seven white." And she had made the seven with a heavy roll on too; it was so exasperating.

They exchanged sides, Violet pausing to murmur as she passed her partner, in tones that were meant to be cutting:

"You might have said so, if you felt sea-sick, and not played so disgracefully. I hate being beaten!"

The scathing allusion to *mal-de-mer*, from which he never by the faintest chance suffered, rankled a little, but the grim satisfaction that he took in having roused her made up abundantly.

The midday dinner-bell came as a welcome interruption to a game that two of the players, at least, were in no mood for—but it was only one of many that began badly and ended well, and *vice versa*, before the end of the *Ogowe's* voyage, as the days flew on into weeks, all too slow for some, all too fast for others.

She was but two days out from Melbourne on a cold, wet early Spring morning, and the burning heat of Adelaide had left everyone too weak to stand the change.

Violet Hawthorn chafed at the vagaries of this 'Sunny South' as she had learned to ironically term it; and tucked up in a quiet corner, her feet enveloped in a rug, she gave herself up to reflection. She had learnt to realise her ignorance of many things, and many new phases of life in the past three weeks.

As usual a small coterie had gathered round Miss Hawthorn.

Hitherto, her life pictures she had drawn at her will. They had come without an effort, just the one central figure—the object round which all other figures on the canvas had grouped themselves in relative proportions. This morning it was all a muddle she told herself, and wouldn't come right.

She muttered something that seemed to the man in the chair by her side to have reference to the weather.

"What's the matter with the weather now, lassie?" he asked. "Anything you want? Aren't you comfy yet? Only say the word and I'll get it."

He had always called her Lassie—never from the first day of their meeting could she remember he had called her by any other name.

From anyone else she would hotly have resented it, but it was not the same with Grahame Leicester somehow—it had never seemed a familiarity from him. It was just a distinction that was characteristic of him, and of their friendship.

She answered him without taking her eyes from the thin grey line of hills in the distance.

"Oh, nothing thanks—I'm a bit mixed, that's all. Picture out in the perspective—always was my weak point; thought I'd outgrown it, that's all—with other weaknesses."

He knew her better than to ask for any further explanation. He had never dared to hope that he was assigned a place in the background of her life, much less that at that very moment he was the figure that had upset the perspective of the middle distance foreground.

True, it had flashed on him with a new light that he had as quickly stifled with his pet philosophy, that when they had at last said "good-night" in the corridor she had held out her hand, a formality so rarely observed on shipboard as to be noted, especially by Grahame Leicester, for it was the first time their hands had met. He had put it down to a warm-hearted wish on her part to show him that she understood; as indeed she seemed

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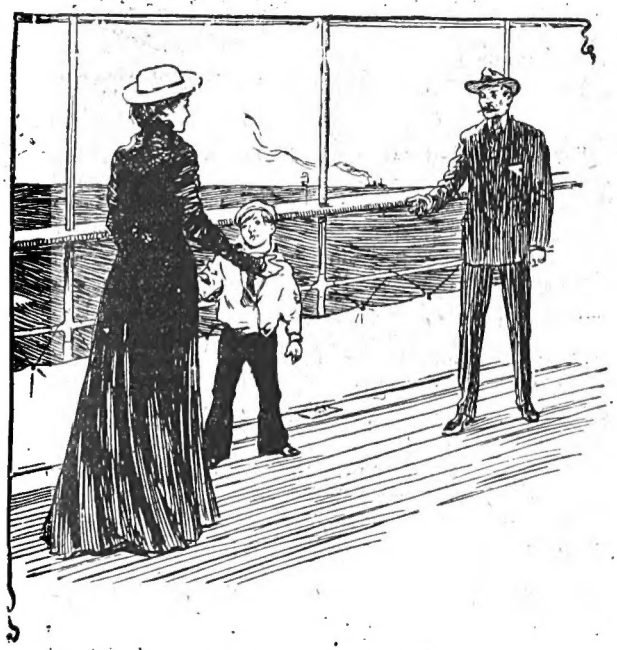
to do all he had been talking to her about, as they paced the lower when driven from the soaking upper deck, and had been the last to leave.

She had been wondrously good to him those last two days he thought with a bitter-sweet little smile, but being a philosopher he meant to make the most of the crumbs. Last night—his last—she had seemed to be a summary of all her moods in one. She had begun by chaffing him, saying that they would all have need of extra handkerchiefs on the morrow to weep for him. She had listened, all soft sympathy, to his oft-repeated tale of the lonely life he must return to, and been all attention as he told of each habit of each of his four-footed and winged friends in the bush. He had told her so much that he had even opened up to her the one sealed chamber of his heart—the one in which Grahame Leicester kept his mother—and there were few women whom he considered worthy of that honour. She had even seemed to understand when he told her that he had "run amok" in his regimental exams. at Sandhurst, and he had got sick of trying to "Aldershot it," and had "come away here." All she seemed to understand, and there was no need to explain that it was not because he was a coward that he did not wear the Queen's uniform; but because a mistaken Government thought it necessary that a man should rightly construe a given number of Latin verbs to fit him to fight a lot of savages with no language in particular.

He wondered with a sort of half-savage jealousy what happy reverie she was lost in now. Almost in his heart he hated this Philip Armstrong—this strong man who was to have no more days of loneliness, whilst he ate out his heart in solitary seclusion from his kind.

"Lucky devil!" he murmured, "to have a girl to come twelve thousand miles to marry him, and I've been that to find one—and here I am."

His reverie was interrupted by a voice saying in measured tones:



He held out her hand with the old bright smile he knew so well.

"The purser tells me we shall not be in till to-morrow, Mr. Leicester, so you will have one more evening."

The calm, measured tones betrayed nothing of the mental struggle that for one tense moment of thought had upset the perspective; and the ringing laugh that ended her meditation of the next few minutes told the man in the chair by her side, if he had need to be reminded, how far he already was in the dim, faint distance of her life's horizon.

He winced slightly as from a wound as he turned to her.

"You might give a fellow a chance to share at least your jokes with you."

She was looking at him now, with eyes running over with laughter.

"Yes, it was a joke—such a joke too—but, I can't help it if you are hurt—it's one of those in which present company are always excepted."

For a moment the sensitive nostrils were extended—then a philosophical smile crept over his face, and perhaps for the fiftieth time that voyage, Grahame Leicester said to himself "sit down."

He had ample need to say it too, some thirty-six hours later, when, in a drizzle of rain and the air heavy with heat, the *Ogowe*'s visitors were ordered off at the Port Melbourne Wharf.

She had been in port barely a day, being behind time, and Grahame Leicester, who had gone off in the morning with his baggage, had returned to afternoon tea with his party, that is the party which ebbed and flowed around Violet Hawthorn.

He had made it his boast, that, since the day when a small lad of seven he had been shipped in charge of the captain of a channel boat, across to school in Dinant, that he had never known what home-sickness was. But to-night, with the handshakings going on around him, he sat as one dazed. He had for the time lost his bearings.

Without meaning to do so, he had for a time made this ship his home, or something had, something indefinable, and now it seemed to him as if there were no room for him in the scheme of life at all.

His mood affected the party in turn, until each ceased to make jokes at the other's expense to keep the ball rolling.

They were roused to a sense of reality by a breezy voice which came from a cabin mate of Leicester's, surrounded by a merry group of girl cousins who were about to carry him off.

"I say, Leicester, old man, do you know the bell's rung? Do you want to go on with the pilot? Hurry up."

"Don't care a hang if I do. Shouldn't mind if I went on to Sydney," retorted Leicester, snappishly.

But he rose and mechanically began to light his pipe as he dragged wearily up the stairs to the companion-way.

Once there, he was soon the centre of a group, all eager to shake his hand.

"Down with the gangway—all on shore," rang out on the heat-laden air. And the last hand dropped, noting an unsteadiness in the voice that it was so hard to associate with anything but fun and laughter.

An unspoken question seemed to be in all minds save his, for the blue eyes asked no questions, he knew she would come, and last, as she did. His eyes, dumb with pain as a sick collie, thanked her mutely; there was one wring of a little brown hand that he had touched only once before, and the gangway fell.

It was only Violet Hawthorn, who saw the thin, white

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line round the mouth and quivering nostrils, as he stood the last on the end of the quay, his hat raised, his pipe in his mouth held, as he had made many a horse chew the bit, hard.

And the *Ogowe*, with her human freight of nine hundred odd on board, glided slowly out into the deep, and the clanking of chains, the faint cheers of a few and the still fainter sighs of many who had yet to learn what the breaking up of a happy shipboard party can mean.

So Grahame Leicester turned to face his life once more. He relaxed the tight tension of his lips, as he turned just in time to catch the bowl of his pipe, for the amber stem was broken.

* * * * *

A small boy with a face of that unusual intelligence that one is accustomed to associate with the young Australian, sat on the rail of a huge mail-boat that lay alongside the Port Melbourne Wharf.

The R. M. S. *Ogowe* was out once more on the long trail, the trail that is always new. It was a morning in early March—the time of year when the stream of homeward-bound travellers is at its height.

The object, the special object of the small boy's attention was a sun-burnt man, iron-grey, with the honest blue eye that ever appeals to the child mind. Having seen the whole of his baggage on board, he made his way along the main deck and up the companion to the one aft devoted to the use of the second saloon passengers, in blissful unconsciousness of the interest he was creating in one small mind.

Seeing his approach, the child loosened his hold of the stanchion to which he had been clinging, and slid down.

Taking the whole of his courage in both chubby hands, he marched fearlessly up to the tall stranger—pulling at his cap.

"I say—you don't mind, do you? but I fink I shall like you—you look what my muvver calls 'straight' —an' isn't it funny? my name's Grahame, too—what's your uvver name? I saw it on the twunks, but I couldn't say it pwoperly."

The tall man, with a suspicion of a stoop in the shoulders that betokened a long life in the saddle, bent down and took the two small hands that were clinging to his nether garments in his own brown ones.

He knew very little about youngsters, but he told himself that there was certainly something about this one that appealed to him.

He sat down upon a deck chair that stood near and drew the boy between his knees.

"My name's Leicester, old man, I don't think we've met before, you and I, though I suppose you're a bit of a canny Scot, too, eh?"

"Well, I fink I'se a 'Stralian, but my muvver says I'se a real Britisher, and I was named after a very old fwend of my muvver's, my weal name is Philip Gwahame Armstrong, only Phil was my daddy's name too, and vey called me by ve uvver so as not to get mixed."

A mist that was not of the sea blotted out the dancing white sea-horses that had been fixing themselves with fiendish persistency on the brain of Grahame Leicester, as he listened.

What trick was Fate about to play him now, he wondered. He looked down at the childish face that nearly touched his own, the face of *her* child, and realised as in a flash why it had seemed so familiar. Was it not the very counterpart of the one that had haunted him now these ten years, a ghost of his life that refused to be laid.

He held him from him at arm's length when the boy's face suddenly lighted up, and before he could draw him to him again, he had gone.

Turning his head to see the attraction, Grahame Leicester rose and followed him. A slight figure clad in the orthodox widow's garb, in all but the white cap, for which she had substituted a white sun hat, was being dragged towards him by her son. She held out her hand with the old, bright, fearless smile he knew so well, and with the air of a school-boy caught out of bounds he stood before her—the woman whom he had left ten years ago almost on that same spot—the little girl in the Tam o' Shanter and the pilot coat.

But Grahame Leicester had found some one who wanted him at last.

And here was a woman, her face lined with the marks that pain and a great sorrow must always leave, and a sadness in the eyes that had been so brimful of mischief.

And all that he said was like the man himself—simple and straight.

"How is it with you now, Lassie?"

For the life of him he could not call her by her name—that name which now as it seemed to him served but to remind them both of what each had lost.

Then, while they paced the deck that each knew so well, she told him how that four years ago her husband, Philip Armstrong, had been the first to succumb to the plague when the *Waratah* had been sent to protect the pearl fisheries and had put in at Samoa for coal; how too, she had struggled on in her lonely life for four years, and now was bringing home her boy to educate him at his father's old school.

Then came his turn, and he related how an unusual stroke of luck had fallen to his share, and he had sold his stock at famine prices, the drought having killed thousands in the country round, "and now," he ended, "I'm bringing all my 'swag' along with me, and mean to stay in the Old Country altogether."

So, day by day, he drew their two chairs to the old accustomed place, and listened still, as she talked of "her Philip," in a softer, gentler tone and with a smile, that in its origin, was often very near the fountain of tears.

They were sitting, as usual, one bright spring morning (this time an English spring, for they were but a day from Plymouth), he with a book, which an observant stranger might have noticed had not had a page turned for half-an-hour, she with some work that her usually

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deft fingers had been busy unpicking more than once. To the woman, it was strangely like that other morning—that Australian spring morning, ten years ago—when something had upset the perspective in her life's picture. This time it was not with a merry laugh that it was set straight, but a deep sigh ran with a tremor through her slight form, shaking it like an aspen leaf. Her work dropped from her hands, and she drew her deep forehead into a perplexed frown.

Her companion glanced up quickly.

"You're not cold, Lassie? You'll be feeling it a bit now after the sunny South, you know."

He reached out his hand to draw her rug more carefully round her, and again that tremor shook her frame.

"You're not ill, eh, Lassie?"

"Oh! no, no, only—Grahame, come here." The little fellow came to his mother's side and she took the child's hand, holding it tightly in both her own. It was as though her soul needed some sheet anchor, some link with that life, that try as she would seemed to be slipping out of her grasp.

Then she went on. "You remember the morning of the day before we reached Melbourne ten years ago?"

He nodded his assent.

"I told you then that perspective was my weak point, I believe it's weaker now, for then I got the picture right again, and now, now it's all out of focus altogether."

Grahame Leicester's sitting down philosophy had to be brought to bear before he answered her. Then, in level tones, he said:

"Why, what's wrong, Lassie? You, you're going back to your friends I hope?"

With the tact and sensitiveness of his type, he had never once alluded to her great loss. Perhaps there was a *soupçon* of another feeling that he was slower to own.

She looked up with something like a dry sob in the throat as she spoke:

"There are none to go to, my parents are dead, and they (the rest) do not want me and my boy—they are poor enough without that added burden, and besides, they would not understand that all my light had gone from my life, and would think me dull. I wonder—oh, I wonder, if any man ever knew how much a little comfort is to a woman—to what length a woman will go to be comforted."

With the quick, warm instinct of a child, the boy had climbed into her lap, and was in danger of strangling his "muvver" with his chubby arms.

For an instant the man let himself go, loosened his grip on the bearing rein, as he phrased it, but the child's action seemed to turn his thought aside, to be a barrier between them, and he quietly answered:

"Is there no one who can do it, Lassie?"

Now Violet Armstrong had learnt much in ten years, and she knew that the man who asked that question in those level tones would give his soul to be that one, but that he dared not wrong her sense of honour to the dead by telling her. She knew, too, that this man had filled such a gap in her life that would for ever after be void and empty but for one word.

So the woman took her life into her own hand and spoke that word—that one word.

"Yes," she said slowly, softly, and deliberately, "You."

There are no words to record what followed, but two hands were gripped in a vice of iron under the friendly cover of the rug, and Grahame minor who had climbed down to pick up his mother's work expressed his unqualified approval of "Lessie"—as he named his new friend—for a father.

That evening, as the long slanting rays of the sun that crept in at the port-hole chased each other along the corridor on the main deck, "Lessie" was to be seen carrying his newly-elected small son to his berth. They had been having rare fun and were running away from "muvver," who panted in the rear. Their cabins were not far apart and as they reached his own, Grahame Leicester stopped.

"Can you spare a moment, Lassie? I've got something to show you."

He reached up for an old tweed coat that hung by the side of his berth, and, pointing to the breast pocket on the left side, he said:

"That pocket's sacred to the memory of a pipe, Lassie; it's been there these ten years. Will you take it out?"

Wondering, she drew out a pipe with a broken amber stem that gleamed in the fading sunlight.

"Why, it's brookted?" exclaimed the boy. "Who did it?"

"Muvver" deliberately answered the man, "but she couldn't help it, so we'll forgive her. Eh! Grahame boy? It's done it's work, so we'll throw it away now."

And he hurled it out of the port as far as his strong arm could throw, and they watched it dance on the white sea horses.

Later that night he explained it all. It was so much easier by moonlight.

"You won't mind not being the other half of the scissors, Grahame?" she said very softly. "There's only one you know that fits really."

But Grahame Leicester had found someone who wanted him at last.

And he was content to comfort her, so that she would make no limit to the love he gave, for to some great souls truly it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Edna S. Gamble.

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The Last Night of the Drama.

THE taste of the theatre-going public at the present time is decidedly in favour of realism. I know that, because I am the manager of a small theatre in a provincial town. I tried to keep to the "legitimate," but the public wouldn't have it and I had to go in for the realistic just the same as others.

I have produced a good many pieces of that class and have done very well; but the most realistic piece of acting that was ever seen on the stage at my theatre was unrehearsed. At least, it was not rehearsed to the extent that it was carried through on the boards. That was a ghastly experience, and I hope it will never be repeated.

I didn't know the whole story at the time; it was unfolded to me nearly five years afterwards, but I know all about it now and can tell it to you.

I need not go into any details concerning the piece; it was a drama with plenty of sensation and pathos, and that's all that it is necessary for you to know. In the last act, and in the last scene but one, the villain is killed by a deformed girl whom he is persecuting; she stabs him with a dagger in a sudden fit of rage.

Now I must introduce you to the chief characters. The villain was a handsome fellow somewhere about thirty; his name was Geoffrey Walton. We had an idea that his private life had not been so good as it ought to have been, but we knew very little about that definitely, and his winning manner attracted us all.

Of course, he was after the heroine, who was Maude Sinclair in private and a tolerable actress in public. She was in the fortunate position of having two admirers, that is, both the hero of the piece and the villain. I will not say anything about the hero, because he doesn't figure in my story, and also because he is a well-known actor at this present time and to the best of my knowledge knows nothing of the inner history of the affair.

The deformed girl was called Jenny Sinclair, but that was not her real name. She was a Malay girl, as a matter of fact, and had been brought to England by Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair when quite a child; she had grown up in their family in a somewhat anomalous position—half servant, half daughter. It was said that the child's father had lost his life in saving that of Mr. Sinclair.

After the death of her parents, Maude took to the stage and the two girls lived together more like sisters than ever. Then Maude asked me to engage the other to take odd parts, such as a servant maid, and I engaged her.

In the piece to which I am referring she was taking a part that was rather more natural to her; in fact, I may as well own it, the drama had been written by myself and I had created for Jenny a part that was very much like her real life. A man who has to write plays must take advantage of all the incidents of life that come within his ken.

Jenny joined our company just about the same time as Walton, and I quickly saw they did not take kindly to each other, although I did not know the reason for this. I did not pay much attention to the fact, because the two were not likely to come into very close contact; but when I was writing that piece I remembered it and I thought it would assist each of them to play the respective parts more naturally. You see, it is a help to an actor when he has something to make him throw himself into the part, as it were; I have heard of a man actually making his wife jealous so that she could play the part of the jealous wife more realistically.

The cause of the dislike was made clear to me later on. Walton was the kind of man who would manage to captivate any woman who could not claim to be more than usually strong-minded, and Maude Sinclair was rather a pretty woman and not gifted with much mental far-sightedness. She soon fell under the spell of Walton, and the other suitor—the man I have mentioned as being a great actor at the present time, gave up a struggle in which he apparently had no chance.

Jenny, it appears, had in some way learnt something of the private career of Geoffrey Walton, and she feared that the upshot of the friendship or courtship of Walton and her foster-sister would be disastrous to the latter, as such friendship had already been to more than one woman whom Geoffrey Walton had captivated by his charm of manner.

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She was a Malay, as I have said, and very revengeful at heart, and the thought of the danger that threatened Maude brought all the savageness of her nature to the front. She watched and made certain in her own mind before she acted; and then she sought an interview with Geoffrey Walton.

The interview was short, but to the point. She told Geoffrey that he must desist in his attention to her sister, and Walton laughed at her and advised her to go back to her native country, as he did not brook any interference from savages who did not know what they were talking about. Jenny curbed her rage with difficulty, and left him with the threat that if he did not act upon her suggestion it would be the worse for him.

Feeling that she had failed in her endeavour to save her sister from danger, Jenny deliberated upon the advisability of putting the whole matter plainly before Maude, but she gave up the idea. She had no proofs, and she was convinced that Maude would not listen; in fact, Jenny had reluctantly to admit to herself that such a course would probably have the effect of estranging her sister and causing her to become more attached to Walton, whom she would look upon as having been maligned. So she allowed matters to drift, while still keeping on the look-out for a chance to upset Walton's plans, and becoming more and more determined to prevent a catastrophe at any cost.

One night when Maude reached home a few minutes later than Jenny, she saw the latter toying with a peculiar dagger which she used in the piece. It was a weapon brought from the East by Mr. Sinclair as a curiosity; Jenny had asked for it after the death of the old man, because there was just an idea that it had belonged to her father.

"Oh, put that dreadful thing away, Jenny!" said Maude with a little shudder. "I really tremble sometimes when I see you suddenly draw it from your waist in that scene where you kill Geoff—I mean the villain."

"It is harmless enough if you are careful," returned Jenny with a strange smile. "I know how to handle the weapon and it is not likely that I shall do myself any mischief with it."

"Never mind, dear," said Maude; "put it away. You may be careful, but it is much safer in the case."

Jenny did as she was requested, but on the following evening she was playing with the weapon again when Maude came along the passage, and she only managed to hide it in time to prevent her sister from catching a glimpse of it. Maude Sinclair generally arrived home later than Jenny now, for Walton accompanied her and sometimes they did not take the shortest route.

It was Thursday night and the last performance but one of my sensational drama had been given. Jenny Sinclair went straight home as was her wont, and once more sat lost in thought with the dagger in her hand. The cat, always a favourite with Jenny, finding that the girl paid no attention to her continued purring, gave a sudden spring into Jenny's lap. In doing so she came in contact with the point of the dagger.

With a cry of pain, the animal sprang to the ground and began licking the wounded part, but in a few seconds she rolled over dead.

Then Jenny knew that the dagger was poisonous! She hurriedly caught up the cat and took it to the back of the house where she tossed the body into an adjoining yard.

On the following evening the last performance of the drama took place and the house was simply packed. The whole thing went off splendidly until we reached the scene in which the villain is killed, and then there was a stage wait which made me cross.

Geoffrey Walton was erratic at times—I think he used to indulge occasionally in strong liquors, and once or twice had not been ready to enter when his cue was given, but the actors generally improvised a little talk to fill up the interval so that the wait was not noticed by the public.

This evening, however, it was decidedly awkward, for Walton was not to be found and Jenny was not enough of an actress to do the needful. So there was a little trouble, which had its usual effect upon my temper. Just as I was getting frantic, and the audience were becoming noisy, Walton appeared and Miss Sinclair with him.

I did not stop to inquire, mentally or publicly, where they had got to, but said something angrily to the belated villain which sent him on the stage with a flush on his cheeks and something on his lips that was not included in the book. Still, that sort of thing is very aggravating to a manager, you know.

The audience were quickly brought back to good humour by the appearance of Walton, and the act proceeded.

The villain tormented the girl in the usual fashion because she would not assist him in his nefarious plans, and I think that his acting was better than ever I had seen it. It is just possible that he played the part with more vehemence than was his wont owing to his being annoyed at what I had said, and sometimes I have gone so far as to wonder whether that hastened the climax. It may be that Jenny's ideas were confirmed or intensified by the angry and—well, wicked—look in his eyes. But I haven't the least doubt that it would have come about sooner or later in any case.

The audience was strung up with excitement as the dialogue continued; presently there was a scuffle between the two characters, and I, who was watching at the side, fancied that there was some talk in an undertone between them which was not in the part. Then came the finale, when the persecuted girl, enraged beyond all bounds, drew the Malay dagger and stabbed the villain.

Down went Walton in grand style, while the girl crouched fearfully in a corner with her eyes fixed on the prostrate form; the audience applauded mightily as a front scene was pushed on and shut Walton and Jenny from view. On many occasions during the run it had

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been necessary to respond to the call, and Walton and the Malay girl had gone in front and bowed their acknowledgments. This evening the call was more vociferous than ever, but instead of jumping to his feet and walking to the side as was customary, neither of the performers moved an inch.

"Here, jump up and go on in front!" I cried, hurrying to the prostrate Walton. But finding that he still remained motionless I bent over him and shook him.

"What's the matter?" cried Maude Sinclair, coming hastily to my side. "Has he fainted?"

"Run for a doctor!" I cried to nobody in particular. "This looks serious."

It was serious; I had seen more than one person die in my life and I recognised that I was now in the presence of death. I had Walton carried to his dressing-room and I insisted upon the last scene being gone through somehow, though before the actors began their final speeches I went on and apologised for the non-appearance of the favourite actor on the ground that he had been taken ill suddenly.

Maude Sinclair and the others thought that Walton had fainted or fallen into a fit; they did not guess the truth and so, although rather shaken, they went through their parts.

Geoffrey Walton was dead; an examination showed that he had been scratched on the hand by the Malay dagger and had died from the effects of a virulent poison.

There was an inquest, in the course of which, evidence was given to the effect that the dagger had been immersed in some Eastern poison, the exact nature of which I was unable to understand, although the analyst gave a copious explanation in very learned language. The conclusion was arrived at that this poison had been on the weapon when brought to England, and that death was due to misadventure.

Jenny Sinclair was too ill to give evidence; the shock seemed to have affected her mind and she was laid up with an attack of brain fever from which she never recovered.

On the day of her death she was conscious for an hour or so, and during that short period she confided to her foster-sister that she had deliberately inflicted the scratch in order to kill Walton.

"I found out by accident that the weapon was poisoned," she told Maude. "I knew what he was, for I met one of his victims outside the theatre. I wanted to save you, and I warned him, but he only laughed at me. I might have spoken to you, but you were infatuated and would not have listened. I learnt that you were going off with him, and I went round to his lodgings on the last day of the run of that drama and once more warned him not to carry out his plans. He scorned me once more and I killed him to save you."

Maude was horror-stricken and inclined to treat Jenny's assertion about Walton as an hallucination, but there was something so earnest in her tone, and she spoke so sensibly, that Maude's disbelief was weakened. It was finally overthrown when Jenny told her to look in a certain drawer and she would find the address of the woman whom the dying girl had met outside the theatre and to whom she had rendered pecuniary assistance.

* * * * *

No, Maude Sinclair never married. She left the stage and settled down in a South of England town in a small business, but three years afterwards, when I called at the shop, I found that it was in fresh hands and that Miss Sinclair had gone to Australia.

G. KNIGHT.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XII. HE BUYS A RECIPE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR.

"We have a gallon kettle in the house, of course?" queried Mr. Bowser after he had reached the end of his cigar the other evening.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Bowser, "but why should you want a gallon kettle?"

"Do you know how many people die of consumption in Great Britain every year?" he asked in turn.

"No."

"Well, the number is close upon a quarter of a million, and in all but a few cases death ensues because the proper remedies are not obtainable when the dread disease is in its incipient stage. Out of every fifty deaths by consumption forty-nine are poor people, who are not saved because they have no money with which to buy a remedy."

"Well?"

"You—you are talking to me, are you?"

"Well, I—I have a remedy."

"You've got a cure for consumption, which you are going to give away to the poor?"

"That's it, Mrs. Bowser—that's the idea. I can't save 'em all, you know, but if I can rescue five thousand of my fellow creatures from death every year I shall feel amply repaid for the few pounds it will cost. I am going to make a cure for consumption and distribute it free gratis through chemists and physicians."

"That's all nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser with considerable tartness in her tones. "You've simply got some new fad to work out, and this turning philanthropist is rubbish. You'd better let consumption alone and cure that corn on your toe."

"You—you are talking to me, are you?" he asked as he put on his spectacles to get a clearer look at her.

"Of course I am."

"And being fully aware that I am your husband?

"But you make me impatient with your fads. Some quack doctor has been trying to get at you."

"Trying to get at *me?* Quack doctor? Woman, I don't want to hear any more such expressions. I don't want my home turned into a nigger minstrel show. If you wish to oppose my idea, founded upon the noblest and grandest sentiments of the human heart, do so, but do it with dignity. You object to my saving five thousand human lives per year, do you?"

"I do."

"You want me to go my way without care while thousands of my fellow beings are marching to their graves?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And not to extend a hand to draw one of them back?"

"Not a hand. You'd better attend to your own business and let the doctors look out for consumptives."

Mr. Bowser stood and glared at her for a full minute. His faced flushed, his ears twitched, and his Adam's apple worked up and down like a toy monkey on a stick.

He had just drawn a long breath to utter a yell when he checked himself and turned away. He had left a number of packages on the hall table, and securing these, he proceeded to the kitchen and asked the cook for the kettle.

"Is it going to be an experiment with gunpowder?" she asked, as she handed it to him.

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"My dear woman," replied Mr. Bowser, as he looked at her sharply, "I think you betray signs of consumption."

"It can't be!"

"But I'm sure of it Do not be alarmed, however. I am about to compound a certain and speedy cure. One bottle will restore you to health, and it won't cost you a halfpenny. I propose to save five thousand lives this year."

"If I've got consumption I'm going straight off to my mother's to-night!" exclaimed the cook, as she untied her apron.

"But you can be saved."

"But I can't wait!"

Away she went to tell Mrs. Bowser and pack her trunk, and Mr. Bowser hadn't got all his stuff mixed in the kettle when he heard the front door shut behind her.

He expected a call and a protest from Mrs. Bowser, but she did not appear. He had brought home treacle, gin, gum arabic, licorice and two or three other things, which were to be mixed with the yolks of six eggs and heated over the fire, and he needed no help.

He had mixed according to a recipe which had cost him a sovereign, but when the compound began to get hot the smell was not agreeable and the taste did not suit his palate.

"While it is the duty of a consumptive to swallow a cure without kicking," he mused as he looked about the pantry, "I might as well mix in something to tickle the palate. I'll just shake in a little ginger. I've heard that consumptives crave for ginger."

The ginger didn't seem to make much difference, and he grated in a nutmeg and then poured in half a bottle of vanilla.

He was slowly stirring the contents of the kettle and wondering if a lemon or two would make it just right when the compound suddenly foamed up and boiled over.

As it ran over the edges of the kettle there was a flash, and a sheet of flame and smoke leapt to the ceiling. Mr. Bowser was in his slippers, and just after the burst of flame had singed off his eyebrows and curled his hair he felt something hot strike his feet.

Mrs. Bowser heard a yell followed by a couple of jumps which jarred the house, but she sat still. She heard Mr. Bowser strike a chair and pitch over it, scramble up and bang open the back door, but she held her chair. Then she knew that he was galloping about the back yard, and she heard people crying "Fire!" but it was not until the firemen were banging away at the door that she rose up. The house was full of smoke and smell, but there was no fire.

A sheet of flame and smoke leapt to the ceiling.

The firemen had been gone ten minutes, and most of the smell had floated out upon the night air, when Mr. Bowser entered the sitting-room and stood before her.

He was a dilapidated man. He had suffered for the cause of humanity. He lifted his right foot and his left foot—he gestured with his right arm and his left arm. He wanted to say something—he wanted to utter hundreds of words with six syllables, but his feelings overcame him.

"Yes, I know," quietly replied Mrs. Bowser, as she looked at him. "Yes, you want to say that I made another attempt to assassinate you, and that the limit has been reached and separation must follow, but you can't get it out. If I were you I'd go to bed."

And like one in a dream he dragged his legs after him from stair to stair, wondering and wondering, but speaking no word, and an hour later, when Mrs. Bowser followed him, she found him in bed with the clothes drawn up to his chin and a look of benevolence on his face.

He was dreaming of saving the lives of five thousand of his fellow creatures annually, but as she gazed on him his toes began to twitch, the look of benevolence faded into one of surprise, and the odour of singed hair filled the room and made him sneeze in a lonely way.

M. QUAD.

Next week: He Comes Home Good-natured and Goes to Bed Happy.

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Mr. Darby.

Our boarding-house was a peaceful home for all of us until Mr. Darby arrived. The trouble with Mr. Darby was that he held opinions. Rather, he didn't hold them. He threw them at people.

Mrs. Cross, our landlady, a widow of enduring charms, had certain positive convictions which she had laid before us many times, without once arousing a contradiction. This was before Mr. Darby came. She made many assertions which none of us indorsed, but we held our tongues in the interest of harmony.

Mr. Seabury had no wish to argue with her because he was fully occupied with his consuming passion for Miss Beatty, the music student, who sat directly opposite him at the table.

As for the others, we had no line of controversy to begin with, and, besides, Mrs. Cross was such a superior woman that it would have been folly for any one of us to enter the lists against her.

Therefore, although Mrs. Cross was a woman of resisting fibre and combative skill, our boarding-house was a peaceful home for all of us, as I said in the beginning—until Mr. Darby came.

Mr. Darby was over forty, slightly bald, with a reddish-grey moustache and a square chin, indicating determination. He was a consulting engineer—an architect or something else so technical that it was beyond our comprehension—and when he gave an opinion he did it in a dry, dictatorial way, after the manner of a college professor. He seemed to believe that his decision always put an end to arguments and was not subject to appeal.

The first evening at dinner, after we had met him and after the dinner had progressed as far as the roast beef, Mrs. Cross had been telling of her shopping experiences that day, and she concluded her narrative with this statement:

"Well, anyway, the women in the shops have much more tact than the men."

Mr. Darby elevated his eyebrows in surprise, and then said, very coolly:

"I don't think so."

Think of it! The new boarder had dared to contradict Mrs. Cross. He had invoked the thunderbolt and seemed quite unconcerned as to the results.

"My opinion is based on several years' experience as a shopper," said Mrs. Cross. "I cannot believe that you have ever done very much shopping, Mr. Darby."

"When I say that women have less tact than men I am merely stating a fact which is proved by any careful observation of the sexes and is corroborated by all the history of the world," said Mr. Darby. "It may be that here and there you will find an exceptional woman who is more skilful as a tactician than a certain man, exceptionally stupid, with whom she may be compared for the moment. But if we must generalise, then I say, without fear of successful contradiction, that men, both in shops and elsewhere, are more tactful than women."

With that they locked horns, figuratively speaking. They discussed the sexes from every known standpoint. Mrs. Cross was sharply sarcastic. Mr. Darby was cool and opinionated, seeming to hold his adversary in good-natured contempt.

Our happy little dinner gathering, usually given over to good-natured bantering and frivolity, had become a debating club, in which Mr. Darby and Mrs. Cross were the contending orators, while we sat as awed listeners.

That evening, after four of us had gone up to Martin's room to smoke our evening pipes, we held an indignation meeting and agreed that Darby was an egotistical nuisance, and that the sooner Mrs. Cross got rid of him the better it would be for all concerned.

Martin was especially cut up. Martin was a quiet little man, as gentle and inoffensive as a house cat, and we had long suspected that he was in love with Mrs. Cross, although no one believed that he would ever summon the courage to declare himself. We had twitted him frequently as to his supposed fondness for the landlady, and his blushes had been a virtual confession.

And on this evening, after the first of the many Cross-Darby debates, his anger at the new boarder showed that he really cared for Mrs. Cross.

"I tell you, no gentleman would sit at a table and contradict a lady as that fellow did this evening," said Martin, with great warmth.

"That's right," we said.

"He is a conceited ninny," said Martin, puffing his pipe with great violence.

We agreed with him.

As I have intimated, the debate as to the tactfulness of women was but the first of many battles in which all the rhetorical and logical weapons were wielded with tremendous violence.

If Mrs. Cross advanced a proposition Mr. Darby would be sure to take exception to it, either in whole or part,

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and instanter the duel would begin. It would continue throughout the dinner hour and would be resumed with unabated fury after we had gone into the parlour. Usually the men would excuse themselves and go up to Martin's room to smoke, and say mean things about Darby.

Miss Beatty, the music student, and the two other young ladies of our strange household would also escape and usually Mr. Darby and Mrs. Cross would be left together to continue the struggle indefinitely. Of course, these debates ended, as all debates must end, with each debater still unconvinced and defiant.

The only satisfaction we derived from witnessing these daily conflicts was in the knowledge that Darby had met his match in Mrs. Cross. She was just as well-read and just as resourceful and quick-witted as he was, and sometimes she dealt a home thrust that delighted all of us and even aroused Martin from his quiet melancholy.

Poor Martin! How he hated that man Darby!

One night we were sitting in his room engaged in our usual occupation, that is, we were denouncing Darby.

"Think of it," said Martin. "That scoundrel is simply badgering the life out of Mrs. Cross. He seems to take a fiendish delight in contradicting everything she says. As a self-respecting woman she dare not allow him to trample her underfoot, and he has not the gallantry to acknowledge himself in the wrong, and you see the result. They are sitting in the dining-room at this minute, engaged in some argument that will last half the night."

"Why don't you go down there and rescue her?" asked Seabury. "She'll be glad to have anyone come in and put an end to the dispute."

"I wish I could," said Martin.

"Why not?" I asked, "Just wander into the room and ask Mrs. Cross to play something. I tell you, Martin, it's your duty to protect her from that man."

"Do you think so?" he asked seriously.

"Most assuredly."

"Well, I believe I will go down for a little while."

He went out of the room, and in less than a minute he was back again, very pale and holding to the door-knob.

"What's the matter?" we asked.

"I didn't go in," he said in a whisper, "I looked in first. It was quiet in there. I walked in—and—and—he had his arm round her!"

"What!" exclaimed Seabury.

"It's a fact. They were both on the sofa and he had his arm round her."

"Why, I thought she despised him," said Seabury "They're always in argument."

"That's the way some people enjoy themselves," I suggested. "We'll tell Miss Beatty what Martin saw and have her find out all about it."

Miss Beatty at once confronted Mrs. Cross with the convicting evidence.

"It is true," said Mrs. Cross. "I regard Mr. Darby as the most brilliant man I have met since my first husband died. He is a strong man—a man of intellectual power and deep convictions."

Mr. Darby told Miss Beatty that he had always wanted to marry a woman of brains, and not a mere doll. The landlady was his kind of a wife.

And so they were married after a courtship marked by numerous fierce and entertaining controversies.

And Martin—our dear old Martin, who had worshipped her from afar all these years—was quite unconsidered.

Poor Martin!

Miss Asket: "What animal would you prefer most for a pet?"

Miss Anteek: "Man."

"What is fiction, pa?"

"Any story that says 'they married and lived happy ever after.'"

Fred: "They tell me at your office that you are only one of the clerks. And you said you were a director."

Charles: "So I am, I address envelopes."

Jones: "Hello, old chap! Haven't seen you for an age. How are you?"

Johnson (from the provinces): "I'm not feeling as well as I might. I've enjoyed very poor health during the past year."

Jones: "Well, I'm glad you enjoy it; most people don't."

Odd Jobber: "I wish I'd got my brother on this heer job with me."

Inquiring Employer: "Why your brother specially?"

Odd Jobber: "Why, ye see, sir, he's got rare cheek on him, my brother has. Why, he'd think no more of asking for a pot of beer over a job like this than nothink."

Servant: "Oh, miss, that Mr. Borem do be coming here again. There's no use tellin' him y'r not at home, for he'll just push past me an' say he'll wait till yer come back."

Miss Beauti: "Then, for mercy's sake, tell him plainly that I'm engaged. Do it in such a way that he'll not try to stop."

Servant: "Yis, mum."

Mr. Borem (a minute later): "Is Miss Beauti at home."

Servant: "Yis, sor, but she do be engaged, and the felly she's engaged to do be waitin' in the parler fur yez wid a club."

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At Jealousy's Door.

"If this is active service, give me as much as you can," said the man as he gazed at the girl sitting on the turfy ground a couple of yards away. "To be able to while away an hour or two every day of my blessed existence in company like this,"—he threw all feeling into his glance—"is compensation for even facing Boer bullets the remaining hours of the day."

The girl bent her head under his admiring gaze. As she mumbled something scarcely audible, while her blushes proclaimed her feelings, the two were joined by another girl—like her companion in many respects of feature, though her face was certainly not so pleasing.

"Hello, Captain Brownton, you here still? Why, Dorothy told me you had gone long ago."

She turned a quick glance upon the other girl, and in that moment such a look of concentrated hatred passed over her face as Brownton, who just noticed it, could scarcely have conceived on the face of a girl who might have been positively beautiful.

In a moment, however, the expression vanished.

The Captain's first companion raised her eyes to her cousin—for the two girls were cousins—and, though in evident confusion, said:

"I—er—thought he had, but I happened to meet him up here—that's all, Jess."

He helped her out of her difficulty.

"Yes! Miss Dorothy caught me prowling round. The General's getting anxious to get at these blessed Boers, and, upon my word, at present we have not a notion, I believe, how to outflank them."

He overdid his explanation rather.

"This awful country is a terror for civilised troops."

But Jess Worburn was not deceived. She felt that these past few weeks had had the result she dreaded. In the comparatively slack time certain of the officers had had in the period of inactivity, Brownton had became acquainted with the Worburns, English farmers in the North of the Colony.

He was a perfect specimen of the best type of English officer, and day after day spent dallying in the company of two bright and handsome English girls, made more *piquante* by their Colonial training, had had the result of making him an admirer of both at first, and an ardent adorer of Dorothy Worburn now.

Alas, for their happiness, they both had given him their hearts.

Dorothy, more confiding and of a less suspicious nature than Jess, little imagined her cousin was her rival.

Jess, however, was quite certain. Masking her chagrin and anger, she lightly chaffed the other two as they walked towards the British camp a short way, and parted from Brownton till another short period of leave.

As it turned out, he was not able to go to Worburn's farm for a couple of days. The division was evidently being prepared for an advance and time was more fully occupied.

He wended his way outside the British lines and strode forward over the veld towards the object of his wishes. Other thoughts struggled for the mastery to-day, however. General Sir Luard Knight, in command, to whose staff Brownton was attached, was particularly desirous of obtaining information of the country on the west of the Boer encampment.

A thorough soldier, and with a more than usual spirit of adventure in him, Brownton was puzzling in what way he might be of service to his Chief. Reconnaissance had produced no result, and spies could bring no definite information.

Walking towards the farm, Brownton became aware of a lithe figure sauntering ahead apparently quite unaware of his approach. He knew Dorothy's form, and all thoughts of external affairs were banished. Hurrying up to her, "Did you know I was behind?" he said, as he pressed her hand.

"Yes, I wanted to see you. Do you know, I know of a path by which your men can easily get round the Boer camp? At least, I think so. You see that road running behind the farm over the rise? Well, the other side, it turns sharp off to the west, and at the corner where it turns there is a path scarcely noticeable from outside which goes right round to the rear of the Boers."

She coloured at the look which Brownton was giving her. His eager attention to the girl had given way to a much tenderer emotion as he watched her.

She found he was not taking in the details and began again. He clasped her hands and told her there was something else he wanted to say of more immediate importance than the circumvention of the Boers.

Little pressing of his suit was sufficient to gain her ready answer, and as they approached the house their talk was not of the tactics of war.

Little did they know that Jess Worburn had watched them from the outset, and Brownton would have felt puzzled to reconcile the momentary look of demoniac hatred which disfigured her handsome face when she knew what had happened, with the fact that the plan which Dorothy was so eagerly afterwards disclosing to Brownton for the discomfiture of the Boers, was really due to Jess.

It was not for another hour that Brownton was able to give his attention to the particulars of the plan shown to him.

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The two cousins lived alone with Dorothy's father. The latter gave a provisional consent to his daughter's engagement to Brownton.

His farm was outside the British lines, but the farmers in this part of the Cape had escaped the raidings of the Boers, probably from the fact of the nearness of the British troops.

His patriotism was not of a particularly active nature, and the conspirators judged it best to keep him in the dark about their plans.

Day after day for nearly a week Brownton went to the farm and made himself master of the route—on one or two occasions taking a brother officer with him.

General Knight had great faith in his Staff Officer, and allowed Brownton every facility to perfect his plans.

* * * * *

A layer of thin haze hanging over the veld heralded the morning of the British advance.

The plans had been carefully prepared.

The path by which the circumventing movement was to take place was unnoticeable to any but the keenest observer, and even then appeared to lead to the foot of a steep slope which was practically an *impasse*.

From Dorothy Worburn, however, Brownton had learnt that there was a gap unseen in the distance, which, once found, would be the means of the surrounding of the Boer position.

Half a battalion was to be sent forward to the foot of the slopes which they were not to scale till the main body was ready to enter the gap. There would thus be little chance of a successful trap for the column being laid by the Boers.

Brownton was with the main body. The column advanced with as little commotion as possible till they were close to the gap. The order to halt was given and word passed to the flanking party to quietly ascend the slope, and, if seen, to keep the enemy's attention as far as possible. Gradually the men climbed the slope.

The order to enter the gap was given. The path was nearly half a mile long. The movement continued till the head of the column had reached the middle of the pass.

Suddenly a terrific fusillade burst upon the imperial troops from the tops of the surrounding hills. For a moment all was disorder—the attack was so unexpected. Then in the midst of men who were falling right and left, the officers gave the word to retire. It seemed too late. The sides of the hills were crowded with Boers who held an enormous advantage both from position and owing to the admirably arranged surprise. The battalion which was ascending the hills to attract their attention was helpless.

In the meantime, Brownton, completely astounded, was endeavouring to collect his thoughts. In a vague way he felt he would be held responsible for the business, and, in a more definite manner, the awful thought that perhaps Dorothy had led them into a trap, intruded itself.

The idea he thrust from him. Slowly the column was retreating, losing men at every step. Brownton, with agonised face, turned to the officer in command and besought him to let him go to the flanking battalion, and endeavour to do something there.

The request was refused. There could be but one thought in the minds of all in command.

Suddenly at the top of the gap Brownton caught sight of a woman's dress as she ran towards the back.

In the distance he knew it was one of the girls, and his only thought being of Dorothy, he felt that it was she who had—awful thought—brought the Boers to entrap the British.

Life no longer had any charm. Might he die! How could he live—branded a traitor, or, at the least, the blundering betrayer of his comrades, and, worst of all, to know that Dorothy had betrayed him.

All this time those in the rear, in full possession of what had happened, were doing their utmost to storm the hill, and the Boers, not quite prepared for such numbers, were gradually giving way.

In front, men were dropping fast: and, at last, Brownton was hit. Almost a feeling of relief went through him as he fell, to lose consciousness the next moment.

When he came to himself in another few minutes, the battle roar seemed as great as ever in his ears, but he was conscious of something unusual. Opening his eyes he found gazing, with pale face and eyes full of tears, at him, Dorothy, murmuring his name and moaning with intense anguish. With a groan he turned from her.

"Go away," he whispered, "Let me die."

Clasping his hand to her bosom she wailed. "But you don't think this of me? Heavens! this is too hard to bear. Oh! how I thought everything had gone well."

And she sank by his side and buried her face in her hands.

Bullets were still flying round them, though they were under comparative cover.

He turned to her.

"What has happened, then? Who told them?"

"I don't know. Jess went out early to lead the other battalion up the hill, and——"

Then the awfulness of an overwhelming conviction swept over her.

Here was the solution of Jess's seeming friendship, in spite of an inevitable feeling that her cousin viewed her as a successful rival.

Jess had deliberately betrayed them for her own jealous ends, and would he die? The feeling of Jess's disloyalty had struck them both now.

Silence reigned unbroken save for the occasional crack-crack of a Boer rifle and the gradually lessening volleys of the retiring party.

Apparently the British were gaining the top of the hill; and the day was not to be lost.

* * * * *

That half hour of silence was the making-up of the bond between the two, and, weeks after, when Brownton had recovered from his wounds, and the whole column had learned from Boer prisoners how a stray bullet had punished Jess for her treachery, he asked Dorothy again for her forgiveness for doubting her, and her answer was good.

Stuart Blofeld.

New Serial Story. *Begin it To-day.*

EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

. . By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

This story of the wooing of Astrid, the daughter of Earl Sweyn, is told by Sigmund, the Skald.

Einar Longsword and Hardrada Hardskull are both wishful to marry the maiden, who has been promised by her father to the latter; but Einar is told that he may proffer his suit if he captures the ship of Edred the Berserk, a notorious pirate, within a year.

While Einar is on the voyage, Hardrada offends Sweyn, and is debarred from paying court to his daughter. After this, another suitor, Othnar Wolf's-fang, arrives, but he does not find favour with Astrid, and accordingly takes his leave after a heated conversation with her and Sigmund.

CHAPTER III. *(continued.)*

I DID not answer, but stood with Astrid as he went plunging over the soft snow on his black pony. Once, when he seemed but a small black dot on the whiteness of the slope that rises up to Saddleback, we saw him stop and come back a few paces. Then he turned and went on and disappeared.

"It is sad work rejecting suitors," quoth Astrid, as we went back to the house. "Would that the gods had not made my face so fair."

"What is done cannot be undone," answered I. "What the Nornas decree will happen, and 'tis no good wishing. Else I had wished away this weakness of mine, which has made me a deedless man, and so barred me from mounting Bifrost's rainbow bridge into Valhalla."

"You had ever a wise tongue, Sigmund," she laughed, and ran within.

Now the weeks passed on, lengthening into months, and the cold and the darkness and silence of the winter grew and waned and went, and the spring came, and the summer, before we had any news of Einar or Hardrada. Our visitors were few, and Othnar Wolf's-fang, we heard, still dwelt sulkily at home. We finished the building of the *Sea-hawk*, which Sweyn had lain down for his son Arvak when he came to man's age, and she and the old *Hofvapnir* and a prize ship, the *Bear*, made a trio of handsome vessels.

The early snowdrops died, the fifa-flowers bloomed plenteously, the frost-lilies lay around the tarns, the gentians clustered on the hills, and the whortle-berries dotted the sunnier slopes, before the longed-for tidings came.

And then one day a battered ship, with one man standing alone at her helm, came slowly up the silent fiord.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT EINAR FOUND AT NORTH-HOLD.

IT was in the glitter of a bright, frosty noon that the *Eagle* came to North-hold. The kestrels screamed discordantly overhead, the blue hawks flew to their nests on the stunted firs growing on the high cliff, the shadows of the mountains lay silent on the still water. Out of the shadows into the light the vessel glided noiselessly, her white sail spread to the scant breeze, and Einar stood forward upon her deck, shading his eyes with his left hand, and gazing at the shore.

Everything there seemed deathly calm; the chilly wind carried few murmurs of noise with its motion; the frost that lay melting on the landing-stage was unmarked by the print of feet.

Einar sprang off as the side of the *Eagle* rubbed along the woodwork of the rude pier, and followed by Algar and Brun, went up the well-remembered path to the old homestead.

The granary door was swinging open when they reached it, and within, the rats were holding high revel.

A fierce exclamation escaped Einar's lips, and, gripping Longsword involuntarily, he strode on. His haggard face wore a terrible expression; the veins of his forehead were plainly to be seen beneath the pallor of his skin.

At last they came to where the great hall had been, and at what they saw, stood as men frozen into statues. There yet remained some of the outer walls where the earth had been banked up; but all within was charred ruin and dull ash, the melting rime of the last night's frost looking strange upon the black and burnt-out embers of the massive beams.

Twice, thrice, the three men walked round and across the heap of ruins, speechless. So fierce had been the fire, so utterly had it consumed and overthrown, that no trace of any familiar thing was to be seen. But Einar kicked aside a heap of black and crinkled woodwork, and there lay beneath a heap of human bones.

They searched again at that, but found no more. They silently counted the bones and lay them straight, side by side. All who had been in the hall had perished together, in what awful agony and with what Norse courage will never be known—and there had been eleven of them. And then, from the ash-covered ground, Einar picked up something dully red. It was the blade of his father's battle-axe, and part of the shaft, charred and crumbling, was yet in it.

Now Einar knew, beyond doubt, that he was an orphan. He uttered a swift cry of rage, then, leaning on the shoulder of Brun, stared awhile at the bones, saying nothing. And his comrades did not dare to disturb his misery.

Now the wind freshened, biting their faces keenly and stirring the light ashes at their feet into little grey eddies, and Einar looked up and shook himself.

"'Tis no use pining over what is done," said he sternly, "but 'twill be great use paying the debt in full. Weeping is women's work; that will be men's. This thing is too foul and cowardly a deed to be settled by the Folk-Ting; at the point of my sword alone will I end it.

"Now listen, Algar Erikson and Brun the Silent. By the keenness of this blade Longsword, which was my father Harald's, and with which he slew Turgrimm and won Gunhild, do I vow to slay Edred and win Astrid; by the weight of my axe do I vow to split Hardrada's skull without mercy. I charge you both, when we come face to face, to leave him to me. I will strike him down alone, to the nethermost depths of Hela! By Odin and by Thor, by Heimdall and by all the gods of Asgard, I make this vow: That before ever I wed Astrid, even though I slay Edred to-morrow, I

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will kill Hardrada Hardskull! Hear me, and forget nothing!"

And Einar raised Longsword to the sky in his right hand, and vowed again the most solemn vows that can bind a Viking, and Algar and Brun raised their blades also, and swore to remember and to help.

Then they dug a deep space in the floor of the ruin and reverently put the bones within, covering them gently with the grey embers.

"That will do until I come again, revenged, to build up the house," said Einar. "But this broken battle-axe I will take with me. It will serve to let Hardrada know, when I meet him, where I have been. It may also serve to chip a slice from his hard crown."

"I shall begrudge you that sport," said Algar.

Brun said no word, but looked the more, and the three men went back to the ship. The place was utterly deserted and silent; what need to stay? Though it was now well past noon, and the breeze was so strong that it gave promise of a storm, the *Eagle* put out from the fiord and plunged her nose into the froth of the rising waves.

They put before the wind, which came fierce and cold from the north, from the clutches of the Frost-God, Thrymm, and drove along the shores two days, being much put to to avoid the crags and headlands and to keep the vessel baled. At Nidaros they ran into harbour and cast anchor to avoid the fury of the storm, knowing that the Tronds were peaceable folk. While they stayed there a trader put in, with news of Edred the Bearsark. He had just escaped pillage himself, he said, by the lucky chance that Edred was burdened with a Viking ship that he had captured, and which bore evidences of a stern struggle.

Einar smiled when he heard this—the first smile his men had seen on his face since leaving North-hold—and questioned the trader closely.

"He was beating up for Strongness, near which, on a steep rock, he has his house," said the man; but, "weakened as he is, and strong a lot of men as you have here, I would urge on you not to attack him without a greater force. His ship is of huge size and wonderful speed, and his crew still very large. You seem goodly champions, 'twould be a pity to throw your lives away."

"Wise words that fall on deaf ears," said Einar. "Call the men together, Algar, and hasten them with the water and food. We sail to-day."

The men obeyed readily, for they were proud of his strength and skill, and glad to see him more himself again, and, amid the admonitions of the Tronds, the *Eagle* once more put out to sea.

The water yet rose in white-crested mountains and fell into glades of glassy green, the wind shrieked along the billows and whistled in the cordage and rigging of the ship, her timbers creaked and groaned.

But Brun held to the helm in grim silence, and Algar saw that the rowers kept to their work, and Einar stood at the prow, finding the hissing of the storm around him a fitting accompaniment to the thoughts that burnt within his soul.

Many times they were in danger, and many times Algar was on the point of advising anchorage behind a sheltering bluff, but the vessel lived on, and in the night the storm abated. At dawn they were able to sail and stand nearer inshore and so went on merrily until the next day but two, when Strongness loomed up on the horizon, and they could see the smoke from Edred's house curling black against the fleecy scud of cloud. Here they overtook the *Destroyer*.

Not a moment did Einar hesitate, though he knew that the darkness would soon be upon them after the brief glimmer of the winter sun. The *Eagle* surged on through the sea, sending a splash of foam from each side of her iron beak, and while the men got ready the grappling hooks Einar and his two champions put grease upon their axes and swords, and sang a song of Thor.

"Tyr grant that this outlaw take it not into his head to run," said Einar. "We can scarcely match the speed of that ship."

"The Bearsark will not run," said Algar. "He will not know who we are until we are upon him, and then it will be too late. But you see that big man standing at his side? Leave him to me. I know him by repute to be Edred's brother, Hakon, a very strong man. He shall fall to my axe."

"Or you to his, if Odin has sent for you, which I pray not yet," said Einar.

And now the ships were not a cable's length apart.

CHAPTER V.

How Einar Slew Edred the Bearsark.

Foaming through the tossing sea went the *Eagle*, Einar standing sternly in the prow. The *Destroyer* lay still on the water, waiting her antagonist, and her crew were amazed at the daring of the attack. Edred wiped the stains from his broad blade, and looked to his hacked mail. Hakon waved his red axe aloft, and shouted over the lessening distance:

"Come nearer, *Eagle*, and let us pluck your feathers for you! We have plucked land-birds before to-day, and found them good eating!"

They were near enough to see each other clearly now, and Einar said:

"Wise men boast when the fight is over, Killing-Hakon and Bearsark-Edred. Mayhap, the *Eagle* may peck your eyes out before the plucking is done!"

Then Edred called to his men to board the enemy when they touched, and answered:

"Now I know you, Einar Longsword. You are a strong man and think to get fame out of killing me. I have something here that can do the killing!" and his sword flashed in the sunlight.

Then the sharp stem of the *Eagle* rushed at the bulwark of the *Destroyer*, but the latter, under the impulse of one

He died transfixed to the bulwark.

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bank of oars, swerved round, so that the ships lay side by side, and men from both threw grappling chains, making them fast together.

Einar and Algar sprang together on the *Destroyer's* deck, and the rush of their men swept back the Bearsark's crew, weary and sore yet from their last fight, half across the ship. Armod, one of Einar's men, was the first to fall. The dread swing of Killing-Hakon's huge axe caught him and struck him down, and he felt no more. Thorstein, his brother, dashed forward to avenge him; but though he laid low Ord and Hugor, the same axe found him out and ended him. Then Algar got free striking space, and made the ruck of men give way before him and so came at Hakon, and there was a fight worthy to see. But silent Brun followed Einar, guarding his back, and the spears that were thrust at Longsword from behind cost their owners dear.

Now the fight was a fury of confusion, the swaying mass of men pressing now across the deck of the *Destroyer* and now back towards the empty *Eagle*. Einar's men were fewer in number than Edred's by more than a score, but they were stout and fresh and the Bearsark's were tired with fight and striving with the storm. For a time the struggle seemed equal. Of the *Eagle's* men Kollein fell, and Biorn and Skallagur; of the enemy, Mizur and Thorein and Sigurdson, and Iron-Toe Ounod; and Brun had an arm wound, and Hakon's helm was split and a red streak trickled down his face.

Edred and Einar were at last face to face and sword rang on sword, but so wary were these two, so keen of eye and strong of arm that for awhile no scratch was come of by either.

"You have Loki's own luck!" said Einar, as a shearing stroke of Longsword was foiled by an upward flash of the other's blade. "I think you cannot be wanted so badly in Hela; but, nevertheless, they must have you."

"After you, cub; not before!" growled Edred, as the great thrust with which he mostly ended his man was turned by Einar's shining steel. "But you are a tough foe, by Thor's hammer."

"Ah, you talk now, Bearsark!" laughed Einar, and again their swords crossed and rang, spark sprays leaping from them in the dying light.

Near them Algar and Hakon yet fought; but the Killer was overmatched at last.

"The Valkyrs ride to-night, Hakon!" cried Algar. "You have been a red-hand; but you fight well, and Odin wants your aid against the coming of grey-wolf Fenrir."

The battle-axes smote and clashed, and Hakon's shaft broke under Algar's blow. The round edge of Algar's axe tore through the mail on Hakon's shoulder, tore through his byrnie and reached his heart, and that was at once his bane.

A great cry rose from the *Eagle's* men at the sight, and they rushed on the foe with fresh vigour, driving them back towards the high poop. Algar saw a Dane who had feigned death creep over the side of the *Destroyer* and upon the *Eagle*, a glowing firebrand in his grasp. The night was fast coming on, and the glare was seen by others. Algar's spear flew at the man, and three more, and he died transfixed to the bulwark, the brand falling into the sea.

Einar swept the Bearsark off his feet and raised him over his shoulder.

Now Edred, seeing this, and Hakon gone and his men beaten, fell upon Einar with the fury of a beast. His eyes glared red in their sockets, he foamed at the mouth. The Bearsark fit came upon him, giving him the strength of ten men. Einar gave way before the whirling flashes of his foe's broad blade, and some cried that Longsword's time was come. But he was wary, reserving his strength, and though he was damp from three wounds, he had no vital hurt.

The sun sank in a cold red heap of cloud behind them, and the wind howled dismally along the sea, sending the wet spume stinging into the faces of the men who fought on the drifting ships. Brun was down, unable to use his arm, and Algar took his place. Of Edred's men there were now no great champions left, and so the fight died out because of the darkness and of the weariness of the combatants, and all stood to watch the struggle of their leaders.

Now Einar slipped on the wet deck, and Edred's blade shone over him, and a cry of exultation came from Edred's frothed lips. But Longsword smote up and caught the Bearsark in the left shoulder, and Einar was afoot again before the great blow fell. Then he, too, caught something of the Bearsark fury, and the fight was awful to see.

At last Edred's madness passed. He became cunning,

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and by a false stroke lured Einar off his guard. Another stroke sent Longsword spinning from his hand, and Einar was in an evil plight. But just then, Brun lifted his head up, and shouted: "Close with him; grip him!" and before Edred could shorten the stroke of his great blade, Einar had dashed in under it and seized him round the waist, and lifted him almost off his feet. At that, Edred threw down the sword and grasped in turn, and there, on the slanting deck, in the dim shine of the stars and the new moon, they heaved and swayed, and lifted and groaned.

"'Tis queer foothold, and one needs the wrestling shoes!" gasped Einar, "but now I am your master, Edred!"

For answer, the other set his teeth the harder, and strove the fiercer, and the two reeled about in a fast embrace. They staggered, tugging and straining, towards the windward bulwark, against which the spray, borne on the wind, dashed in white foam, and as they neared it a thought came to Einar.

He shifted his foothold suddenly, and while Edred made a great effort to throw him, made fast his grip in a better way. Despite the cold, the perspiration stood in beads upon them, ran down their faces in trickling rivulets, and rose from them in grey steam. Once, twice Einar put forth his strength and failed; then, for the third time, when men cried out that he was spent and Edred slackened his hold somewhat, Einar exerted all his muscle in one fierce straining heave and swept the Bearsark off his feet, and raised him over his shoulder and cast him behind him, head first, over the bulwark into the sea.

And that was how Einar Longsword slew Edred the Bearsark.

"He will not die by Odin's mark," said Algar, peering into the night but seeing no trace of him, "though he has enough marks upon him. Well, he has sent many into Rana's net in his time; it is fit that he should go there at last. And now what to do with these men of his? Shall we finish them and cast them after him?"

"Nay, I am weary of fight, and have already fulfilled Sweyn's chief condition," said Einar, leaning against the mast. "If they will give in to us, and help us to work the ship to Nidaros, we will let them go free after."

"It is a foolish scruple, lad," growled wounded Brun. "They are all rats, and will live to nibble your doors some day."

"That is as it may be," said Einar; "but methinks Odin does not want them yet. And I have in mind now what my mother Gunhild said when last she spoke with me; that there was a new Faith in the South, which bade men kill not except in a just cause or in defence of self."

"I have heard of the White Christ faith," said Brun, scornfully. "'Tis a nithing's creed. But do as you will, Einar; only mark my saying."

When it was put to the remnant of Edred's men whether they would yield or fight, they wisely chose the first course, and so the chains were unloosed, and the sails furled, and the anchors let down. They made good of the night where they were, and with the dawn and a quieter sea, sailed for Nidaros.

Einar was not disposed to lay Strongness waste, as his men desired, nor to risk the *Destroyer* in search of Hardrada, so there was nothing to do but to lay in harbour until their wounds were cured and the *Eagle* was put into proper repair and made taut for sea.

Men came from far south to see Einar as he lay at Nidaros, for never had they thought to see a man who could take Edred the Bearsark in his arms and throw him in fair wrestle. And when Einar told of his feud with Hardrada there were more men to swear service to him than the *Eagle* would hold, and the Tronds vowed to keep the *Destroyer* for him in safety against all comers.

When the worst rigour of the winter was past Einar put out from the river with a full and merry crew. They sang a song to Frey as the galley went stately down to the sea, the light glittering on the golden head of the eagle at the prow, on the unbroken rows of shining shields along each bulwark, on the banks of oars that rose and fell with rythmic regularity in and out of the deep blue water.

Einar's face alone wore no smile. The picture of the charred ruin of North-hold was yet strong before his eyes, and as yet he had taken no step towards vengeance. Algar and Brun, who were well again, muttered together as they watched him, but said nothing openly.

CHAPTER VI.

The Meeting of Hrolf and Hardrada.

Now when the *Vulture* passed the *Long Dragon* in the fiord below Raven's-nest, Hardrada Hardskull laughed uneasily, and spoke thus to his man, Alfdane:

"We are well out of there, troll, methinks! By the sourness of Othnar's visage he has heard the news which we kept to ourselves so well, and has gone up to tell it. If we set foot in Raven's-nest again, my cunning troll, it will not be in peace. What think you?"

Alfdane, who was a short, dark-haired man, laughed a fey laugh, and said:

"If not in peace, then in war, Hardrada—or in stratagem. Last night I read the runes that are written in the stars for keen eyes to see, and I read that I should come again, with few men, to Raven's-nest, and that Einar should at last fall into your hands. Further than that I could not read, but I saw flashes of ruddy light, and heard the clashing of axes and swords and the rush of a great ship coming through the sea. And because I have a grudge against Einar, because his father slew mine, what I read gave me joy."

"I know little of such were-work as yours, Alfdane," said Hardskull, "but I do know that you have a tireless tongue. Yet so far you have been a good prophet. Can you tell me whether I shall win Astrid or not?"

"That I cannot, Hardrada, but if you will let me have the slaying of Einar when you have got him it shall not be owing to the slowness of my wits if she be not your bride within the year. And if things befall as I think, I have this plan ready."

And he bent and whispered in Hardrada's ear so that not even their own men should know, and when the tale was told there was an evil smile on both faces, and Hardrada's smile broke into a laugh horrid and grim.

"We will drink deep of Bragi's cup that night, troll!" cried he.

First they steered for North-hold, "For where," said they, "will the young wolf be but in the old wolf's lair?" Finding that deserted, however, they put the *Vulture* about and went north, seeking news. The storm that drove Einar into Nidaros drove them on to the Lofotens, far out of harm's way. Raging sorely, Hardrada harried the peaceful folk of the islands unmercifully, victualling the ship *strang-hög*, and drawing upon himself many curses—and something more.

When they were out at sea again, the first rough squall discovered a leak that came near sending them all to Rana, and they were forced to run for the nearest land and beach the dragon high and dry. And by the time she was mended, and sea-fit, the fierce frost held everything in an iron grip, and the days were too short for voyaging. So the winter passed, and long after Einar had slain Edred the *Vulture* lay inactive in the north. With the breaking of winter's spell her oars flashed out again, and she breasted the waves, hastening south.

It was breaking light on a white, frosty morning when the *Vulture* was beating up against the wind off Strongness Rock. They saw a beacon flare up on the height, and knew where they had been driven in the darkness. Loud and long Hardrada upbraided Alfdane, and having drawn in the

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oars, the dragon slipped back in the wind. Hardskull had no mind to fall into the clutches of Edred. But even while the red-pine oars were yet rattling through the rowlocks, a long ship came foaming out from behind the headland. A great black snake's head, with lolling fangs, curled over her forecastle, a twisted tail over the poop, her ropes and spars were white with rime, and thirty oars flashed on each side of her, beneath the rows of shields. On her wide sail was roughly painted the outlines of a crimson hand.

"'Tis Hrolf Red-Hand, Edred's son!" cried the men of the *Vulture*. "Odin save us now!" And though they were flying before the rising gale, out came the oars again.

But the long ship came on swiftly, overtaking them with ease. She seemed to walk the seas, to glide down the watery valleys towards them as a petrel rides the waves. And presently she was within hailing distance, and Hrolf put his hands to his mouth and roared down the breeze:

"Heave to, there, lest I run you down! Who are you, and know you any news of a Viking named Einar Harald-son, of the Long Sword?"

"That I do!" roared back Hardskull, "for my name is Hardrada, and I am seeking him now for a blood-feud."

"And that am I, also," said Hrolf, as the ships now rode side by side. "I came back from Viking cruise but yester-day, and found at our own garth, instead of my father, but a parcel of frightened women and old men and two of the *Destroyer's* crew who have come up through the snow from Nidaros. And they tell me that Einar has slain my father in open fight and taken his ship. So here I am at sea again, and my ship, which was named the *Sea-Snake*, I have re-named the *Avenger*. And what have you to say?"

Hardrada and his man exchanged scared glances when they heard of Einar's deed, but hated him all the more; and so Alfdane stood forth and spoke for them, telling Hrolf all that he thought needful, and that, from all indications, Einar should not be far from Strongness.

"Then we are friends, Hardrada," said Hrolf Red-Hand, "though I am an outlaw. By Tyr, I vow not to leave you until this Einar be slain, and by my own hand; and if what you say be true, it will not be long before we meet him, for the home waters are small when foes are seeking each other in them. We will hunt him together, Hardrada."

Hardrada agreed only too readily; the compact was made, and the vessels sailed together.

He and Algar got to the helm and held the ship straight before the wind.

CHAPTER VII.

How Hrolf Red-Hand Sank the Avenger.

Thus it was that just past noon on the same day as the *Eagle* lay under the lee of Hargen Spur, sheltering from the fury of the fierce north-easter that was lashing the sea to storm, her crew saw two ships come round the point, and heard a great shout of exultation. One ship bore upon her prow the wicked head of a vulture; the other, the head of a snake; and Brun, who was first to make them out distinctly, knew at once with whom they had to deal.

No urging needed Einar's Norsemen to get out the oars, and send the *Eagle* to meet her enemies in the teeth of the wild gale. The galley leapt towards them like a living thing, and Einar, Algar, and Brun, standing on the roof of the forcastle, sharpened their weapons, and looked to their shields as well as they could in the short time.

BODLEIAN

"Southward from Strongness
Fiercely comes Red-Hand;
Comes with him Hard-Skull,
Vulture and *Sea-Snake*
Flying together
From Ægir's anger;
Red-Hand and Red-Skull
Both seeking Longsword,
To send him to Rana!"

sang Ragnulf, a Skald, who had come aboard the *Eagle* at Nidaros.

"Well sung!" cried Algar. "But here comes the outlaw son of the Bearsark, whose brother my axe ended, and here also is our old friend Hard-skull, at close quarters. Greeting, friends!"

The ships were near now, but the shriek of the gale tore the words out of Algar's mouth. Yet Hrolf, whose *Avenger* was nearest, understood the ironical air, and sent his spear hissing at the champion. It missed him, but tore through the taut sail of the *Eagle*, rending it from corner to corner, and the craft lay at the mercy of the wind.

"Hard round with the helm and board her!" cried Einar. "Never mind Hard-skull's ship. The Storm-God rides the waves to-night, and none of us will die straw deaths."

"It is a good rede," said Brun, as the men stood ready to cast the hooks over the gulf of raging sea that was yet between them. "But what said I about letting Edred's men go free? I see two of them aboard there—the rats have nibbled already. It is dangerous to fight two foes at once, even for you, Longsword."

"The All-Father knows best," said Einar shortly, "and the tale of my defeat is yet to tell. . . . Be ready to meet me, Hrolf Red-Hand, so that I can throw you over to the fishes, as I threw your father!"

Then the ships crashed together with a noise that was heard above the roar of the storm, and Einar's men made her fast. With a wild cheer the Norsemen sprang into the waist of the *Avenger*, and from the poop of the *Eagle* Ragnulf urged them on with wild songs. At first the crush of men was so great that none could get striking room for their heavy weapons, and daggers had much to do. While they thus struggled, some of Hrolf's men signalled to the *Vulture*, and she strove to beat round to leeward of the *Eagle*, and board her from the open side, so as to get Einar's men between two fires. But the storm was now so furious that this was no easy task.

The sea lay almost calm for a moment after the vessels had gripped, then broke into thousands of white-crested hillocks, as the fierce tongues of the wind forked along it.

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Then towards the lowering sunset-arch thundered the trampling horses of Aëgir. The sky went inky black, save for the lemon glare of that arch in the west, and the swift rush of the wind, when its full fury burst over the labouring vessels, bent their masts like willows, and flattened once more the waves around them. The high wall of water that rose white in the north-east came curling, and foaming, and hissing towards them, its roaring top plainly visible in the flash of the lightnings that danced before it, and before it reached them there fell on the decks a few big drops of rain. Then it reached them and passed them, hurling the three ships forward like floating logs caught in the vortex of the Maelström, and the rain came down in a pouring deluge.

It was a question whether the ships would live long in such a wild sea; but, heedless of that, the fight on the *Avenger's* deck raged with unabated fury.

Hrolf's man, Sigvald, was the first to fall when Brun's axe got room to whirl, but in recovering himself from the stroke Brun's feet slipped on the reeling deck, and Hrolf's sword gave him his bane before Algar could stop the blow. Algar wounded Red-hand in the cheek, but so uncertain was the light, so fearfully the vessels pitched and tossed on the mountainous sea that he could not follow the advantage. Indeed, no man could tell rightly where his blow would fall, and not always friend from foe.

Towards the stern Einar had cleared a space with the dread sweeps of Longsword's razor edge, and thither Hrolf gradually worked his way. Twice he came near to being crushed under the rain of blows and the fall of parts of the rigging, but at last he and Einar stood face to face, and as well as the darkness and the flying spindrift would let them, thrust and slashed at each other.

Hrolf fought well, for he was young and lithe of limb, but he had not the hardness of Einar's muscle, and so was slowly borne back. Yet the spray upthrown from the bow of the ship as it rushed through the storm came right along the deck and dashed into Einar's face before its wet advance was checked by the gale that howled behind. Through the curtain of its blinding shower Einar could not see far, and his strokes fell short. Once in the contest he gained time to look round him from the poop top, and saw the *Vulture* flying like them before the storm, trying in vain to come to closer quarters; saw Algar labouring fiercely by the mast with his ruddy axe; and saw Ragnulf the Skald transfixed to the woodwork of the *Eagle* by a stray spear.

Suddenly he lost sight of Hrolf in the chaos of night and slaughter, and rushing forward, Longsword joined Algar.

Men kept closed lips now, for the howl of the gale, the wash of the sea, and the creaking and straining of the vessel's rigging and timbers made all talk useless. Hrolf's men were already at bay at the leeward bow, and most of them wounded and sore. But all at once the mast came crashing down, killing in its ponderous fall Gudbrand and Leif, two of Einar's staunchest men. And no sooner was it down than the *Avenger* gave a swift lurch to port, and Alsvid, one of the wounded who lay under the trampling feet, heard the rush of water into the hold. And then Hrolf's face appeared above the combings of the hatchway. Alsvid cried, "'Ware treachery!" with his dying breath, and Einar heard the cry and saw Hrolf, and roared above the violence of the elements, so that Algar and those nearest might understand:

"Back to the *Eagle*, men! Hrolf, the nithing, has scuttled his own ship, thinking to drag us altogether into Rana's net. Back to the *Eagle*, and cast off the grapnels! Let the coward die that way alone!"

There was a fierce struggle as the news spread, but Einar's men were the stronger, and got back to their own ship. Algar, guarded by Longsword, carried the body of silent Brun. As wolves robbed of their prey, Hrolf Red-hand and his men followed, attacking desperately until the last chain was cut or broken and the ships parted. For one brief moment, illumined by the vivid glare of the lightning, Einar saw the *Avenger* staggering on the sea. Then she reeled over and plunged sideways into the boiling cauldron of waters. A short distance away the *Vulture*, both her masts snapped off, lurched helplessly under the lash of the rain and the whip of the wind. When Einar looked again he lay on his back on the deck and saw only the network of ropes overhead and a pall of black cloud underspotted with streaks of grey.

He was on his feet again at once, and together he and Algar got to the helm and held the ship straight before the wind, and so, through that awful night, the *Eagle* tore on, swerving neither to right nor left, and none of those aboard her looking for or caring about their enemies. Towards morning the Aëgir's wild mood passed, and an hour before dawn the wind was so far abated as to allow of some sail being made. When the day came the cold, drenched, and weary men looked out over a wilderness of dancing waves made bright by the sunshine.

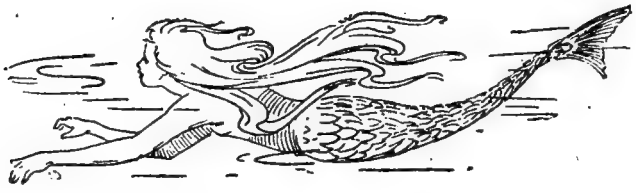
"See, Frey smiles on us already!" cried Algar, pointing to the path of glittering light that lay between the vessel and the risen sun. "I call that a good omen, after the night through which we have come safely. Though we are safe none too soon, for I'll warrant the arms of our men are tired enough of baling. Where to now, Einar?"

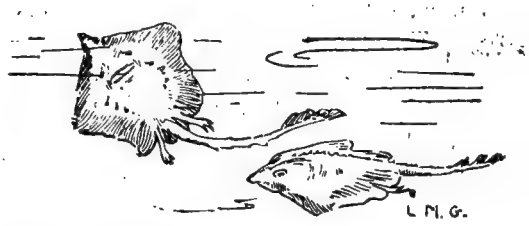
"To the nearest shore," quoth Einar gloomily, "if we live till we can reach it. By Odin's beard, we have got little advantage out of this fight, save the death of Brun, and that is a sorry thing for both of us, Algar Eriksön."

"He will be in Valhalla now," said Algar slowly. "I thought last night I heard in the shriek of the storm the cry of the Valkyr that came to lead him over Bifrost Bridge. Never died a braver Viking or truer friend. But 'tis fool's work repining; let us talk of other things—for one, how well met was Hrolf Red-hand and his fate, and whether Hardrada's ship be yet afloat."

But although they did not know it for some time to come, Hrolf Red-hand had escaped from the wreck of the *Avenger* by clinging to a spar, and being washed up against the *Vulture*, had been pulled aboard. It is a saying of the Northlands that evil men live long.

(To be continued.)





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SHORT STORIES ABOUT DOGS.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's Sport," by Mrs. C. N. Williamson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. E. Holdsworth, of 11 Baxendall St., Bradford. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT SERVANTS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 2nd, Post-cards only, please.

A Lost Opportunity.

A TALL official-looking man with a pocket-book in his hand, called upon our friend Bodger, and observed:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bodger, but I believe you possess—ah, yes—a black retriever dog with a white patch over his eye."

Visions of unpaid dog licences burst upon Bodger, who with great energy replied:

"Oh, no; oh, dear no; nothing of the kind. He is a poor, stray brute who followed me home, but does not belong to me."

"Oh, indeed," said the stranger, "that is all right then. Only my client, Mr. Robson, accidently shot the dog this morning, and I came round to compromise the matter by offering you five pounds; but of course if he is not your dog—well, good morning." E. H.

Rather Suspicious.

TEDDY'S Aunt Jane, from whom he had great expectations, came to visit him the other day.

Now Aunt Jane holds very decisive views on the temperance question, and when Teddy took the old lady for a walk accompanied by his dog, and the dog walked up to the door of the "Dun Cow" and looked round as if expecting his master to follow, Aunt Jane looked inexpressibly shocked.

"Edward!" she exclaimed icily, "what does the dog mean?"

Teddy is not easily knocked off his perch, however.

"Yes, aunty, isn't he a remarkably intelligent creature? He thinks it's a dairy, because of the cow on the sign, and, you know, he's wonderfully fond of milk."

Explanation accepted, but it was a close shave, wasn't it? E. C.

Settling the Difficulty.

I HAVE a friend who owns a fox terrier pup (also a good-natured old collie dog) which persistently tries to rouse the temper of the latter animal.

The other day it was trying in its usual persevering way to aggravate him, by biting his nose, pulling his ears, hair, and tail.

The old dog put up with it for some time, when suddenly he rose up with a determined air, took the pup by the back of the neck, popped him into a sideboard cupboard, shut the door, lay down against it to keep it from coming open, and calmly slept, regardless of the puppy's yelps. A. Y.

Full-Blooded.

CHARLIE, aged eight, proudly brought home a slinking, bow-legged, and altogether disreputable-looking pup. "Where did you get that dog?" asked his sister contemptuously.

"I bought him from a man for a shilling," said Charlie, with all the pride of ownership.

"Mercy! the idea of paying a shilling for that horrible beast!"

Charlie's eyes flashed. "He isn't horrid. That shows how much a girl knows. The man guaranteed him to be a thoroughbred cur!"

J. H. D. G.

A Cross-eyed Dog.

Is that dog of yours good for anything?" he asked of a man as he motioned to a canine that lay behind the door.

"Is he? You just lay your hand on my shoulder and utter a 'whoo.'"

The man did so, and the dog sprang up and bit his owner on the leg and gracefully retired.

"How do you account for that?" asked the inquirer, as a general laugh went round.

"Hang it! I had forgotten that he was cross-eyed," was the reply. "I ought to have put my hand on your shoulder and yelled."

W. P.

A Sagacious Terrier.

I USED to take my terrier dog to work with me when I was employed at a certain quarry, where we frequently blasted the rock with dynamite.

One morning he sniffed for a long time about a heap of rock which had been blasted the previous day, and tried to push his head underneath a big stone. At last he gave up the attempt and lay down by the side of the stone.

A couple of hours later I was going to smash this same stone with a hammer, when the dog sprang up, growling, and seized the handle in his teeth.

Such unusual conduct surprised me greatly, but at that instant I caught the glint of brass metal underneath the stone, and stooping down, I drew out an unexploded cartridge.

The dog at once showed the wildest delight.

But why did he guard the spot for hours, and how did he know there was danger in my striking the stone? He took no notice of the empty cartridges lying about.

W. B.

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"Them's Ours."

A Lancashire worthy had a dog for sale which he said was a champion rat killer.

A gentleman wanting such a dog, went to see if he could buy it; but the owner not being at home, he was invited to sit down until his return.

The dog being in the room, the gentleman was watching it, when a mouse scampered across the floor; but the dog only stared at it, and made no attempt to catch it.

The owner, on his return, invited the prospective purchaser to the yard to show the dog off.

When a rat came running past, however, the dog only stared, when the gentleman, in astonishment, said:

"Why, he will neither kill rats nor mice."

"Oh," replied the owner, "them's ours, that's why. Wait till he sees somebody else's."

F. B.

An Easy Way of Finding Out.

At a dog show a short time ago two boys were noticed standing at a certain stand containing a fine specimen of a Skye-terrier.

It possessed such an abundance of hair as to give it more the appearance of a small door-mat than that of a member of the canine race.

The two young dog-fanciers seemed deeply interested over the dog, but evidently puzzled about something.

Having made a critical examination of the Skye-terrier, one of them was heard to say:

"Bill, which be its head, and which be it's tail?"

"I'm blest if I know," responded his chum. "Its a reg'ler puzzler. But I'll soon find out," he continued as a sudden idea seemed to strike him. "Let's prick the hanimal with a pin, and see which end he barks at."

C. R. C.

Not the Right Dog.

A street urchin was wont to play rather roughly with a good-natured bull-dog, owned by a shopkeeper of the neighbourhood. One day the boy was walking with a chum when he saw the dog approaching.

"Hi! There's Towser!" he cried. "Now see me stop him."

He stepped in front of the dog, with arms extended, and partially blocked the passage. The animal looked surprised, stopped, and evidently considered within himself what it would be best to do.

"I never knew him to act like that," said the joker. "He allers lays down on his back and rolls. I'll stir him up a little!"

With that he sprang at the dog, caught him by the ears, and began pulling him about.

"Towser" appeared evidently amazed, but he proved equal to the occasion. Fastening his teeth in the boy's trousers, in startling nearness to an expanse of bare knee, he held on like a vice.

Just at that moment the boy caught sight of an unfamiliar spot of white on the animal's head, and dropped his hold, at the same time taking to his heels, and leaving a goodly portion of cloth in the creature's mouth.

"Run, Pat, run!" he shouted to his chum. "He's gone and turned hisself into another dog!"

G. W. P.

The "Slipper" Dog.

Here is a story of a dog, which has the further merit of being true.

An Irish retriever, which had been taught to bring his master's slippers where required, was one day expelled from the drawing-room when visitors were calling, as he was making himself rather troublesome.

The dog, feeling himself in disgrace, in order to propitiate his master, went to every bedroom in the house and collected all the slippers and old shoes he could find, and deposited them outside the drawing-room door.

Imagine the feelings of the lady of the house when the door was opened for the departing visitors!

J. G. B.

A Head for Business.

Algernon: "Ah, my dear boy, so glad to see you. And how is your suit with Miss De Rich coming on?"

Augustus: "Weally, my boy, I can't say that I've made much powgwess so far, but I believe I've hit on the wight idea now. Do you see this dawg?"

"Of course. What a delightful pug; just like the one that Miss De Rich admired, by the way."

"It's the vewy one, my boy. She went into ecstacies over it at the dawg show."

"Ah, I see; so you've bought it for her?"

"No; for myself."

"For yourself? What good can that do you?"

"Why, my boy, can't you see? Ba jove, the dear girl will have to take me or lose the dawg, you know."

F. P.

A Dog that Started Trains.

There died, some time back, one who was spoken of by the local Press as "A very popular member of the staff of the Great Eastern Railway." He was a black and tan collie dog, and he was not appointed to the "position" which he held by the officers of the Company, but by himself.

Although self-appointed, time and habit brought about his recognition as assistant train-starter at an East Coast station. Through residence at the station he had acquired an instinct which told him the exact time at which each train should start from the terminus on its journey.

As the moment drew near the collie became restless and excited. As the bell uttered its first warning sound, he would scamper down the platform, and, planting himself close to the engine, bark furiously until he saw the wheels begin to move.

Having accomplished the starting of the train, as he supposed, he would rush to the guard's or conductor's van, and hurry the conductor to his post.

As the train passed out of the station he retired, and was seen no more until the time was near for another train to start.

M. I. N.

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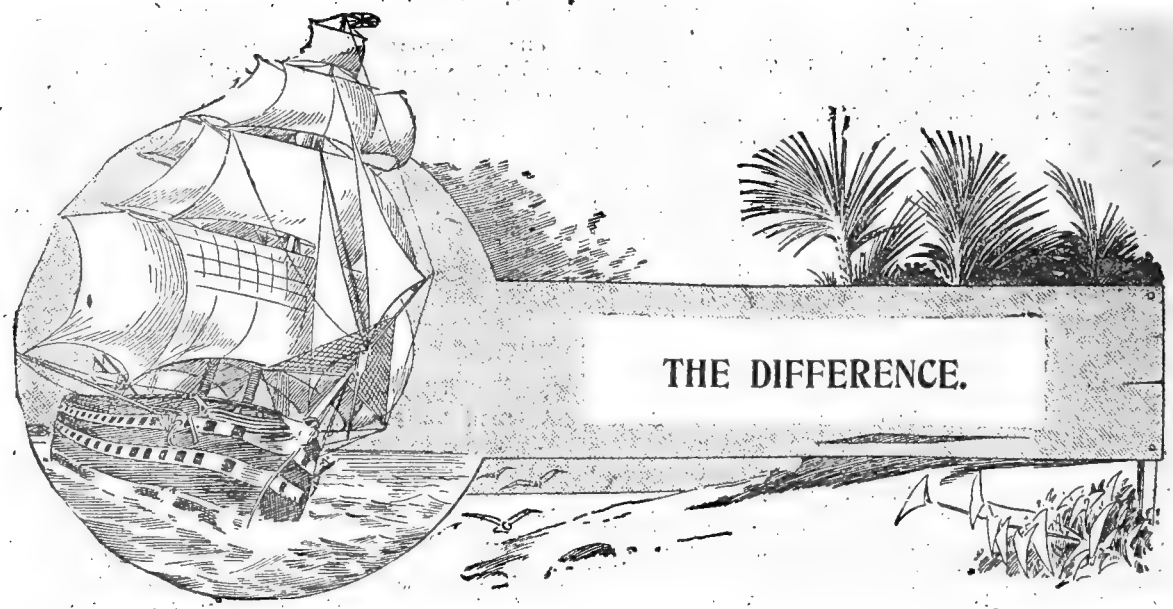

THE DIFFERENCE.

"WHAT is it you tell me? That you have promised to marry Ray Allan? And yet only last night I saw you walking and talking with Ned Bruce in a way that would lead people to suppose he was your devoted lover. Oh, Beth Adams! That I should ever have to acknowledge to myself that I believe you are a flirt!"

Beth laughed a little constrained, nervous laugh, and, going over to the fireplace, curled herself up on the hearthrug at her aunt's feet and leaned her head against her knee.

"Now, Aunt Myra, that is too bad, for you see you not only acknowledge it to yourself but to me also. And, auntie, people would be right in supposing Ned to be my lover—he, too, asked me last night to marry him."

"And you mean to tell me, Elizabeth Adams," giving the girl's shoulder a gentle push, "that you accepted Ray Allan when Ned Bruce wanted you?"

"Why, auntie, you wouldn't have me marry both of them, would you? And Ray asked me long before Ned. Besides, you see, I—love Ray, and I don't—seem—I mean I don't care about Ned in that way."

"Then all I can say is you must have a depraved taste or a very low estimate of manhood. To most women one look into Ned Bruce's honest, manly eyes would be worth more than Ray Allan's whole body, cynical face, long legs and all."

Then, seeing a hint of tears behind Beth's trembling lashes, she added hastily:

"There, there, child you shall decide for yourself in a thing like that—I've had my say." And she went hurriedly out, leaving Beth to dream on in the twilight.

How terribly dull it was, she thought, getting up from the hearthrug with a yawn, and going over to the window and looking out into the wintry twilight.

Only last night she was so supremely happy, and now everything seemed upside down. Even dear Aunt Myra, the only mother she had ever known, was scolding and calling her a flirt because she had promised to marry Ray Allan instead of Ned Bruce—and just when she was feeling so miserably sorry for Ned herself.

Poor, patient fellow. How kind he always was to her! How many times during the last few weeks she had wished he were not so good. It made her feel uncomfortable when he looked at her with those true, honest eyes of his.

But three months later, after she and Ray Allan had quarrelled and broken off their engagement, she thanked Heaven that Ned Bruce was kind to her.

"Ray and I have quarrelled; he has gone away for ever; I shall never love anybody else, Ned; but if you want me, knowing all this, you can have me."

That was what she had said to him, as she stood angry and white and proud one soft spring evening in the dim old garden. And he, believing that his own great love for her would break down every barrier at last, had opened his arms and taken her into their strong, safe shelter, his bonnie, beautiful Beth.

When the violets came, and the sweet spring winds were blowing white with the wild apple blossoms, they were married, and Beth went to live with Ned and his mother in their pretty cottage that nestled at the foot of the towering hills like a brown bird's nest; and the sweetest and the saddest year of Ned Bruce's life began.

Tourists flocked to the hills that summer. Hillsborough had never been so gay. The big hotel half a mile away was crowded. Ned Bruce kept several horses during the summer season for the purpose of taking these travellers up the hills, where some of them always wanted to go in pleasant weather for sight-seeing, on picnics, sketching expeditions, or the hundred and one pastimes that people of wealth and leisure find to while away the hours. Picturesque drives wound up to the tree-crowned summits, and the view from the top was grand.

Ned did not monopolise the business by any means; there were half-a-dozen other men who kept teams for the same purpose. But somehow, after a first acquaintance, this quiet, reserved young fellow, with his gentlemanly bearing and attentive kindness, was always given the preference.

A good many strangers were in the place this year, among them Sybil Dare, with her beautiful face and large fortune, and little Daisy Dare, her sister, who was just recovering from illness. In those long, delightful

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almost daily drives up the hills, Ned and Daisy became the best of friends.

At seven children love whomsoever they find lovable, and Ned had a charming way with little folk. The fever had left her very white and weak, but as she grew stronger and better acquainted with him she proved a winning little chatterbox.

Whatever pleased Daisy usually pleased her sister, too, who idolised the child, and it was not long before the haughty Sybil found herself watching each morning with Daisy for the kind gentleman with the handsome horses to take them up the hillside.

Sometimes they used to stay all day up there, "close to the sky," as Daisy said, Sybil sketching "sweet glimpses" that caught her fancy, a scraggy silver birch, maybe; or a tiny brooklet tumbling gaily down the hillside, with a glint of blue sky through the alders. And Daisy explored the ledges for bits of dainty moss and wild flowers.

Ned was busy all day, fetching and carrying other passengers, who only cared for the drive up and back again. But after a while, as the days grew hot, their all-day visits usually meant a book in a shady place for Sybil, while Daisy scurried about everywhere, until, tired out, she, too, sat down under the tree with her sister, to which cool retreat she used to coax Ned to come when he was not busy and read to her.

"Please come, Mr. Bruce," she would plead, clinging to his hand, "your voice is ever so much nicer than Sybil's. It makes the little shivers go down my back to hear you read, like it does when I go on a switchback. Did you ever go on a switchback, Mr. Bruce?"

"Yes," with an amused laugh.

"Nice, isn't it? Then I know you can understand about the shivers."

So he used to be persuaded sometimes, and, sitting in the cool shadows, would read in his clear, low voice until the yellow head nodded drowsily against his arm, or dropped fast asleep upon his knee.

And all summer long, while he was guide and entertainer for this yellow-haired sprite, his heart was down in the valley with his precious pale-faced Beth.

It seemed to him she grew whiter and sadder every day as the summer advanced. And—ah, keenest misery! he thought he knew the reason. Ray Allan was back in the village; he had been there a month or more. Nobody but the good God knew how he hated the sight of his handsome, imperious face.

Poor Ned! his loving heart was torn with jealousy, and every look into Beth's piteous white face stung him like a lash.

Early one sunny August morning Ned entered the hall with a bunch of dewy red roses just as Beth was crossing it.

"Here, darling, are some of Aunt Myra's roses for you."

"Oh!" rapturously. "Did you get them, Ned?"

"Yes, dear, I ran over while the horses were finishing their oats; I thought you would like them."

"Indeed, I do," burying her nose in the odorous half-open buds. "Oh, Ned, how kind you are to me."

She had been shy of his caresses of late, flushing and paling if he only looked at her; but just for one brief instant she seemed to have forgotten everything but the roses and him.

"Strange that I should be, isn't it?" smiling tenderly down into her upturned face. "Prove that you think me so by going with me up the hills this morning. Will you?"

But her face was hidden now; she was sobbing on his shoulder.

"Don't, darling!" a little break in the tender voice. "What is there to cry about?"

"You!" she answered with a passionate intonation.

There was a merry picnic on the hills that day, every conveyance was crowded. A band played somewhere among the soft shadows, and there was feasting and gay laughter.

Daisy was furious at the invasion of so many people. As she slipped her small hand into Ned's some time during the afternoon she whispered:

"I think it is horrid, Mr. Bruce. They've gone and sat down right under our dear tree, where we read. If it wasn't awful wicked I just wish God would make a big earthquake and shake 'em all off this hill, anyway. And, besides, you've had to go down and back so many times. I am sure your poor ponies are about suffocated this hot day. Oh, dear! it seems as if this has upset everything, doesn't it, Mr. Bruce? Come now, and help me find Sybil; she sent me to look for you, she wants some flowers up on the rocks and can't reach them."

And Ned went away with the child to find her sister, laughing amusedly at her funny talk. They found Sybil presently, and while Daisy ran back again to have one more peep at the intruders, Ned took off his hat and climbed slowly up the steep ledge to where above him swung the laurel spray she wanted, its dark green leaves and waxen buds waving in the soft breeze.

The tree branches about him tumbled his hair, his hands were scratched, and there was a rent in his sleeve, when a few minutes later he stood at the foot of the ledge once more, laughing a little at his battered appearance, as he held out the spray of laurel to Sybil Dare.

And then—was he dreaming?—the beautiful face, not cold and proud now, but pallid with passionate tenderness, leant towards him, her tremulous eyes sought his, her breath was on his cheek; he could feel the wild throbbing of the pulse in the white fingers that clutched his arm as she half-whispered, half-panted out his name:

"Oh, Ned—Ned!"

Just for one dizzy instant he gazed, fascinated, enthralled—the next, the hot blood rushed over his face in a torrent as he unclasped the jewelled fingers from his arm, picked up his hat, and said coldly:

"It is time to go home. I think my wife will be waiting for me."

They rode slowly down the sunset hills, utterly silent except for Daisy's prattle. She looked in amazement from one to the other of her mute companions, wondering why nobody talked.

At last, stealing her hand into Ned's, and nestling close up to him with a little shiver, she half sobbed:

"Seems as if the summer was all gone, doesn't it, Mr. Bruce? I believe I begin to feel cold already." Then turning to Sybil, "What makes you look so white and funny, Sybil? You almost make me want to cry. Have you got a chill like I did when I had the fever last spring?"

"Don't talk, darling, I am tired."

Down in the valley, where Mrs. Bruce and Beth sat on the veranda of the brown cottage watching the sunset, Beth asked quite suddenly, in a voice that she tried to make steady:

"Mother, have you noticed, or do I only imagine that Ned has changed a good deal this summer?"

"No, my daughter, I had not observed any change.

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Edward is always patient, especially when things go hard with him; he is so very patient!"

The sweet, kind voice, so like Ned's, faltered a little as she spoke, and she took off her gold-rimmed glasses to wipe the tears that blurred them.

"Ned," Beth said, creeping close to his side as they sat in the garden in the moonlight that night, and nervously turning round and round the ring he wore on his little finger, "will Sybil Dare stay in Hillsborough through the autumn, do you think?"

"Sybil Dare?" a touch of scorn in the kind voice. "I hardly think so, though I certainly do not know what she intends doing. Why?"

"Nothing, only I hoped—I mean I thought—oh, Ned, don't you understand? Why will you make me say it—the hideous tale that is in everybody's mouth—that Sybil Dare is in love with her handsome driver—that she goes to the hills each day for the sake of being with you. I believe my heart is breaking. Oh, Ned," pantingly, "has my coldness, my indifference, driven you away from me? Answer me—do you care for Sybil Dare?"

"Good Heavens, no! Not if she were the only woman in the world. Oh, my darling, you have believed this tale, and all the while I have been suffering tortures, because I thought my little white-faced girl was pining for Ray Allan's favour."

"Oh, Ned."

"Oh, Beth."

Looking into each other's eyes they both laughed.

"What a muddle we have made of life so far. I began it first by trying to imagine my silly heart was breaking for Ray Allan, who was never worthy of any woman's regard. Then you kept it up by failing to understand how entirely I soon grew to love you, and we have both ended it by doubting each other all the summer."

"Thank Heaven it is ended, and we understand at last," he said, in a joyous voice.

* * * * *

In a princely home in the city, where a beautiful woman dwells, you can see, between the quick opening and closing of her chamber door, a picture hanging on the wall. A hillside, tree-shadowed against a cloudless summer sky. In the foreground two figures; a man's face, winning and tender, smiling down with his beautiful eyes at the little yellow-haired girl whose hand he is holding. And down in the corner, framed in with the pictured faces, a spray of withered mountain laurel.

A. M.

Sister: "Has she treated you falsely and broken off the engagement?"

Brother: "No, that's the trouble. She insists on keeping her engagements—all of them."

Doctor: "Do you know the effects of getting too much mercury in your system?"

Denny: "Yis, doctor, Oi'd be a thermometer."

The sermon of the best preacher in the world will not make so much impression upon a congregation, as the sudden pattering of rain on the window-panes of a church containing two hundred new summer hats.

"Still they come," wrote the reporter, who in his secret heart called himself a "journalist."

"But no," he mused, "that is hardly appropriate for a headline to the preliminary account of the women's rights convention."

And he carefully crossed out the word "still."

"What!" cried the labour leader as he entered the house, "no supper yet!"

"No," replied his wife, calmly. "You will remember that I began work at six o'clock this morning."

"What has that to do with it?" he demanded.

"My eight-hour watch ran down at two o'clock this afternoon," she answered.

"Oh, Harold!" thrillingly exclaimed the lovely heroine, throwing her arms about his neck, "do you still love me as of old?"

"My darling," said the stage hero, with rapture. "My soul's delight! Keep your awkward hoofs off that corn of mine, or I'll jerk that jute wig off your head!"

But this was in a lower tone.

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A HORSE THIEF.

THE first prisoner that "graced" the new jail at Oakhurst, in South Australia, was a young fellow named Dave Chillet.

He was a stranger in this romantic community, which went far towards proving that he had stolen the horse. It was a fact that a roan mare was stolen and that circumstances pointed with a steady finger at the stranger. This being quite sufficient, he was put in jail.

Oakhurst could hardly be classed as a village; indeed it scarcely held the dignity of a cross-road in point of importance.

Its buildings consisted of a court-house, which served as a church; a general supply shop, a few "residences," and the jail, a strong log cabin with an iron-grated door.

John Morgan, sheriff and jailer, lived within a few yards of the jail.

Netty Morgan, the old man's daughter, returned from a visit in an adjoining neighbourhood, one evening, and was told that a prisoner had at last been secured for the jail and that it was her duty to feed him. At this appointment to high and important trust the girl jumped up and clapped her hands.

"Oh, that's fine!" she cried.

"Glad you like it," said the old man, "for I don't want nothing to do with a horse thief, and your mother says she wouldn't feed one to save his life."

"I don't like a horse thief better than you an' mother do," she quickly replied, colouring and dropping her hands with a limpness that marked the decline, if not the death, of her enthusiasm. And if I have to take care of him just because you think I like him better than the rest of you do, why, I won't have anything to do with him."

"Come, now, Netty, I don't want any of your foolishness. Of course you don't like a horse thief any better than the rest of us do, but I want you to take charge of him and feed him until after the court meets and tries him. If you don't I'll employ Nan Stokes——"

"I'll look after him, dad. What sort of a looking man is he?"

"Looks well enough. It's the way he acts that got him into trouble."

"I think I'll go out there and see what he's like."

"You can't see out there now. It's too dark."

"I can take a light. If he's my prisoner I shall do as I please about him."

She took down a spluttering tallow candle and went out to the jail.

"Hallo in there," she said, holding up the candle high above her head and attempting to shake the grated door.

There was a rustling of straw and then a voice answered.

"Well."

"Come up here so I can see you," said the girl.

He came to the door.

"I can't see you very well now," she remarked, trying to throw more light on him and pressing her face against the bars.

"I never saw a live horse thief, and I want to see what you look like."

"I'm not a horse thief, miss or madam, I don't know which."

"Miss, if you please. I'm only eighteen years old. I can't see whether you stole that horse or not."

He laughed with a loud haw-haw, and then said, "just like a woman."

"Of course, for I am a woman, or the making of one, anyhow. Well, I'll have to wait until to-morrow before I can settle your case. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that I am your keeper, and you can't have anything to eat except what I've a mind to give you."

"I hope, then, that your mind is liberal, miss."

"I don't know about that; I'll have to wait until I get a good look at you."

"Just like a woman again," he said.

"Of course, I'm just like a woman," she replied.

"And I never before had cause to wish for good looks," he rejoined.

She went away without saying another word, and the prisoner went back and lay down on his straw bed.

* * * * *

The sun's rays were shining through the bars when he awoke the next morning, and an old hen and several chickens stood pecking near the door.

The chickens moved hastily away and then the girl stood there looking at him.

"Good-morning."

"Good morning, miss."

He went to the door and smiled at her.

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"Your mouth isn't so pretty that you need to smile," she said, and then, after studying him closely, added, "I don't know whether you stole that horse or not. When I look at you this way (moving to the left) I think you did, but when I stand here (moving to the right) I think you didn't."

"Well, then," he replied, pointing to the right, "you'd better feed me from that side."

"Oh, you are just like a man," she laughed, "but as I'm just like a woman, I'm afraid that I'll have to look at you from the worst side."

"If I were a woman I know you would, but as I am not, I thought that you would seek to see me at my best."

"Now, Mr. Smart, just for that I'll not give you much of a breakfast," and she didn't either; but she made up for it at noontime.

"I have brought my sewing," she said, "and am going to sit out here in the shade and talk to you. This is the first time I ever had a man where I could talk to him as long as I wanted to."

He looked at her with a pleased expression, and she sat down and began to sew.

"Where are you from?" she asked, looking up.

"Oh, from almost everywhere."

"How long have you been in this colony?"

"Only a few days—hadn't been here but a short time when I was arrested."

"That was bad—that is, if you are innocent."

"And I am, miss—what is your name?"

"Netty."

"And I am innocent, Miss Netty."

"I don't know, but I expect the court will settle that point when it meets."

"Yes, but I'm afraid it will not be settled in the right way."

"I don't know about that, but I know it will be settled."

"I hope it will soon be settled one way or the other, for I don't like the idea of staying very long in this hut."

"Yes, but when it is settled you may go to a worse one."

"That's consoling, surely; but do you really think they will send me to prison?"

"What a funny question to ask one! How do I know? But tell me how they come to accuse you."

"Oh, they found me walking along the road and took me up. I had no horse."

"But Ned Brown says that you passed his house riding one, and if that's the case, what did you do with it?"

"I did not pass his house riding a horse."

"But he will swear you did, and will give it as his opinion that you were afraid of being caught and sold the horse to somebody."

"Get up here, little girl, and look at me—look into my eyes."

She got up, and after gazing into his eyes, said:

"No, you didn't steal a horse. You couldn't do such a thing, and I will believe you no matter who swears against you."

"I could kiss you for those generous words."

"No, you couldn't for I wouldn't let you. I wouldn't want a man to come kissing me for my words. If he couldn't kiss me for myself he shouldn't kiss me at all."

"You can safely talk of kissing to a man in jail. How long before the court meets?"

"About a week."

"As I am the only man to be tried I suppose they will get through my case in short order."

"I suppose so; and I do hope they won't send you to prison, for now that I know that you didn't steal that horse I like you ever so much."

"And I like you," he said.

"Oh, of course," she laughed, "for a man always likes anybody that feeds him. I think your eyes are just lovely."

"You make me blush, little miss; and wouldn't that be a novel sight—a blushing jail-bird?"

She fed him on chicken and biscuits, and at evening sang to him. She declared that he was her first and only beau.

"But," she always added: "I would hate you if I thought you stole a horse."

One morning she brought him more than the usual amount of food, and when he marvelled at the abundance she said:

"This must do for a whole day."

"Why so?"

"Because I am going away and won't be back until late this evening."

The day was a weary one to the prisoner and he longed for evening. The sun went down, the stars came out.

A dog whined and then a cheerful voice said:

"I'm back again."

"Yes," he cried, "and just in time to give a soft touch to the hardest day I ever spent."

"Oh, what a flatterer you are! But you didn't steal the horse, did you?"

"No, little girl. I'll swear I didn't."

"I know you didn't—I know you couldn't. I've got news for you"

"What is it?"

"The court meets to-morrow."

"I am glad, and yet I'm afraid."

"You must not let them see that you are scared. I'll sit by you during the trial."

She did sit beside him the next day, and when the judge, after hearing the verdict, sent him to prison for five years, she hung her head and wept.

It was evening and the prisoner was taken back to his cell.

A dark night came on, and the wretched man, knowing that on the morrow he should be taken away, lay on his straw bed, wishing that he might die. Hours passed. He was deserted.

The dog whined.

"Keep quiet, Jack," someone whispered, and the girl said, softly:

"You thought I had forgotten you."

"Yes."

"But I hadn't. I wanted the key and had to wait till Dad went to sleep. They had a man to guard you, but I made him drunk. Dad's drunk, too," she giggled.

"What are you going to do?" the prisoner asked, almost breathlessly.

"I'm going to let you out, but you must do exactly as I tell you and not say a word. If you try to run they will catch you to-morrow, but if you follow my plan they never will find you. Come on, now."

She had unlocked the door.

"Come round this way and don't say a word. There's the o'd dog, but he doesn't count. If he had, I'd have made him drunk, too. This way, now."

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They went into the wood, where the timber and underbrush were so thick that they had to pick their way along.

"Let's stop here and rest a minute," she said.

"Are we far enough away?"

"Yes, and they can't find us anyhow when they're drunk."

She giggled again.

"Little woman, you are an angel."

"No, simply a girl that doesn't want to see an innocent man go to prison."

"Heaven bless you!" he said.

"And may Heaven bless you!" she replied, "and bless you, and bless you, and keep on a-blessing you till you are safe from the people about here."

"But what will they do with you, little girl?"

"They won't do anything to me. Dad will scold but that will be all."

"But won't the officers of the law put you in jail?"

"It wouldn't be good for any one of them if he was to try it. Mother says I'm awful when I get cross. We'd better go on now."

"All right, but don't you think you'd better go back?"

"If I was to leave you now you'd wander about in the woods till they found you."

"What time do you suppose it is?" he asked.

"About three o'clock.

"And where shall we get to if we keep on walking?"

"We'll get to the river about daylight."

"And then what?"

"I will show you."

Sometimes, coming upon a place less dense, they walked briskly, and then, entering the thick underbrush, they were compelled to pick their way along.

"It's growing lighter" he said.

"Yes," she answered, "and the river isn't very far now."

They trudged on, catching here and there faint glimpses of the coming sunrise.

"Here we are at the river," she cried.

"And now what?" he asked.

She took hold of his hand, and, as she led him down a bank, said:

"We'll have to go up stream some distance, but not very far. I know these woods even in the dark."

"I don't understand you."

"See!" she pointed to a boat. "You know I was gone a long time the other day. Well, I brought that boat over here, me and an old man."

He uttered an exclamation of surprise, and she giggled.

Still holding his hand, she led him to the boat.

"Row to the other side, and float down under the willows," she said.

He stepped in the boat, still holding her hand.

"I must say good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," she whispered still holding his hand and looking back towards her home.

A short silence followed.

"Netty," he said, "I cannot leave you this way—I cannot deceive you. I did steal that horse."

"Oh!" she sobbed, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Don't, angel, I tell you that I stole the horse."

"I'm going with you," she said, and the boat floated out on the current of the sun-blazing stream.

G. KNIGHT.

ARE YOU TOO FAT?

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer heat, with the outdoor enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possibly deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once come with the advent of the glad summer tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its eighteenth edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation, that any over-corpulent lady or gentleman can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained, post free, by sending three penny stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27 Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

—*Gloucester Standard.*

[AN EXPLANATION.]

The publication of the following testimonial demands an explanation, having regard to the practice—which I have consistently followed, and to which I shall strictly adhere in the future—of keeping private the names and addresses of correspondents who consult me with regard to corpulency. In this special case there are ample reasons for making this single exception to the rule. The letter speaks for itself. It is, in the language of the day, a "record" in the history of the cure of obesity. That a gentleman—the more particularly because he lives in a tropically hot region such as Brazil is—should have achieved successful results by the use of my preparation in a hundred cases, constitutes an epoch in the annals of this department of pathology. Mr. Upton's enthusiasm in the cause of reducing corpulency is, doubtless, explained by his own satisfactory experience in undergoing my treatment; but, all the same, his missionary zeal in the cause of anti-corpulency is something of which I am naturally proud. That this gentleman is conscious of the beneficient potency of the preparation in the case of persons who suffer from heat through their obesity, is evident from the fact that he not only authorizes, but suggests the publication of his letter, urbi et orbi.—(F. C. RUSSELL.)

F. UPTON.

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S. Paulo.

De W. CLAUSON—THUE.

F. C. Russell, Esq.,
Woburn House, Store Street,
Bedford Square, London.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your esteemed favour 3rd ultimo, contents of which has had my careful attention.

I am sure you will be pleased to hear that I have over 100 persons here under your treatment, and without one single exception, all with most satisfactory results, for I take an interest in the business, and have been most careful in exacting the regime you prescribe, which I have had translated and printed, besides the good information I can afford from my personal experience, added by the complete cure I obtained by your treatment I cannot conceive how anybody can be the willing bearer of a burden of fat, having so efficacious and easy a cure as can be effected by the use of a few bottles of your anti-corpulent preparation.

I remain, yours truly,
F. UPTON.

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Mr. Russell will be pleased to forward, post free, a copy of his book, "CORPULENCY AND THE CURE," 256 pages, in a sealed plain envelope, to all applicants forwarding 3d. in stamps to Woburn House, 27 Store Street, London, W.C.

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F. HOPE JONES.

His Lecture at Grantown on Ambition and Perseverance.

ESTEEMED FELLOW CITIZENS,—While I cannot say that this is the proudest moment of my life and worth thirty years of toil and poverty, I can conscientiously declare that I am pleased beyond expression to note the cultivated and corpulent audience in this hall to-night.

The pink handbills scattered through the town with lavish hands have given you the subject of my lecture, and it only remains for me to take up a collection for the benefit of the unbelieving heathen of China and proceed with the business in hand. I was asked this evening if this would be a spiritualistic *séance*; also if anything would be said in favour of a new parliamentary candidate. Make your minds easy on that score. My lectures are all perfectly straightforward, and I never wander from the subjects given.

There are tens of thousands of men in this world who are waiting for money to help them begin a career. They are sitting about on the fences, loafing round the shops and walking up and down the streets looking for some one to give them a start in life. It never occurs to them that they have the capital wanted right at hand if they would only make use of it—ambition and perseverance.

Our first picture this evening may not be recognized at first glance, but after consideration you will be able to identify it as the man who upset Europe for years—the Emperor Napoleon. For years and years as a young man he hadn't a halfpenny left on Saturday night after paying his bill. He had to wear old clothes, smoke cheap cigars and lodge in an attic. Even the cross-eyed daughter of his landlady and the bow-legged butcher at the corner looked down on him.

Nobody believed that young man had it in him to make a patent churn, but they were mistaken. He had ambition and perseverance. All he was waiting for was to get his hand well in, and when he finally got it in he went sailing to the top like a rocket. He jumped from an attic to the head of an army, from red herrings and dry bread to the fare of an emperor.

He said to himself, "I will conquer," and conquer he did. You who are wearing out the seats in the park night after night as you wait for someone to come along and give you a help up can do as Napoleon did. You may have to chop wood and shovel snow for a year or two, but ambition can't be kept down, and perseverance is never knocked out for more than a day.

Some of you in this representative audience have heard of Christopher Columbus. He was a man who loafed at the corners for years, waiting for his career to come along. He was always behind in his house rent, always in debt for his provisions and there were people who didn't hesitate to tell him that he wasn't good for much.

Our artist has caught him as he loafed about town with his dog at his heels, and the observer can scarcely believe that fame lurked under that old hat. It did, however. One morning Christopher woke up loaded with ambition. He had made up his mind to discover something. I don't suppose he was at all particular what it was at first, but after a little he decided on discovering America. That was ambition. Perseverance didn't come in till after he had met with disappointment.

No one believed in his theories. No one would lend him a shilling to forward his plans. For several years, nearly all his time was spent between cadging free lunches and trying to make folks believe that Spain and Portugal were only half the world.

He finally began to make himself believed, and after discouragements enough to have driven most men to give up in despair, he was fitted out for a voyage and America was duly discovered.

Suppose that Christopher's ambition hadn't been aroused? Suppose that after he had met with all those disappointments and given up in despair a few times he had lost his perseverance? I tell you, my friends—and F. Hope Jones is a man who always knows what he is talking about—America had the closest kind of a shave from being left out of the swim, and gratitude should force the Americans to name all sorts of places and things after the man who discovered them and gave them a place in the world.

Take the case of Cæsar. When his father died, there wasn't £2 in cash in the house, and so many creditors filled the front yard that the funeral had to be put off for two days. Coal was up, house rent advancing, and a man might hunt the town from end to end and not find a job.

Young Cæsar had to confront a situation which might well have appalled a stouter heart. He had neither trade nor capital, and about forty different creditors were nagging at him for the old man's debts. He went out and sat down on the garden wall to think things over.

Our artist caught him as he sat. Should he throw his hands up in despair and go out of the game, or should he call ambition and perseverance to his aid and conquer fate?

He decided on the latter course, and within an hour he was fairly making things go.

The world is always with an ambitious man. When it was seen that young Cæsar was persevering for all he was worth, people stopped to encourage him, and it wasn't a year before he was away up the ladder. You know what Cæsar did. Ambition and perseverance carried him to the top, and he remained there to the day of his death.

I could go on and give you the history of Socrates, Pliny, Plato, and numerous others. You would find in each and every case that ambition and perseverance made them what they were.

Take my own case, for instance. Modesty forbids me to make any extended reference, but in a spirit of confidence I wish to observe that but for ambition I should to-day be selling a patent washing machine in the provinces, and but for perseverance the name of F. Hope Jones would never have stood out in letters a foot high in the *Grantown Bugler*, as was the case only yesterday.

My liabilities are £50, and my capital fifty pence, but I cannot be kept down. Like the phœnix bird, I shall rise from the ashes, and, like Columbus, Napoleon and Cæsar, I shall climb to the top and stick there like gum to a plum-tree.

C. B. LEWIS.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

In this competition a prize of £2 will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

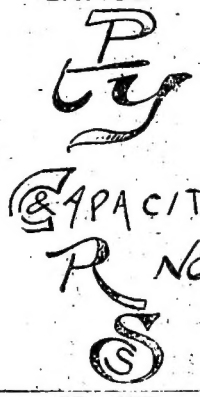
Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 9th, 1900.

EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS A SENTENCE.

What are they?

No. 153.



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No. 158.

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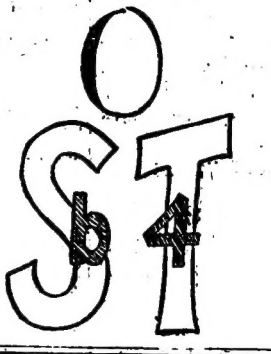

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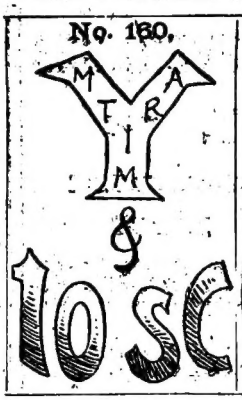

No. 161.

No. 162.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 130 to 135.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Miss Aida Birch, 12 Cathcart Hill, Junction Road, N., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "Francois the Valet," by G. W. Appleton, has been sent to:

John O'Sullivan, 17 Coburg Street, Cork.
Miss A. Moore, 69 Huskis on Street, Liverpool.
Mrs. Emma Cameron, 2 Salisbury Terrace, Cherry Bank, Perth.
Miss Theresa Murphy, 95 Spencer Street, Everton, Liverpool.
C. Spence, 214 Dalston Lane, N.E.
Miss M. Brownhill, Avondale High School, Sutton Coldfield.
C. A. Puddicombe, The Retreat, Plympton, Devonshire.
Miss Mary Ryan, 21 Abbott's Road, East Ham.
Mrs. Allen, 51 Jedburgh Street, North Side, Clapham Common.
George Irvine, 36 Northgate, Hartlepool.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 136 to 141.

No. 136. Black, slack, stack, stalk, shale, whale, while, white.

No. 137. TOMATO SALAD.

No. 138. "Well begun is half done."

No. 139.

W	A	S	T	E
A	C	T	O	R
S	T	O	N	E
T	O	N	I	C
E	R	E	C	T

No. 140. EVANGELINE.

No. 141. Foster, Forest, Softer.

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